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S.B.73
Theological School
IN CAMBRIDGE.
The Bequest of
CONVERS FRANCIS, D.D.

# WHY ARE YOU A LUTHERAN?

OR

## A SERIES OF DISSERTATIONS,

EXPLANATORY OF THE DOCTRINES, GOVERNMENT, DISCIPLINE, LITURGICAL ECONOMY, DISTINCTIVE TRAITS, &c.,

OF THE

## EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

DIVINITY SCHOOL LIBRARY HARVARD UNIVERSITY

BY B. KURTZ, D. D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

JOHN G. MORRIS, D. D.

Be ready always to give an answer, to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. 1 *Pet.* iii. 15.

**Baltimore:**

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## RECOMMENDATION.

BALTIMORE, MAY 19, 1843.

WE the undersigned, ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, have read with satisfaction a series of numbers recently published in the Lutheran Observer on the question: "*Why are you a Lutheran?*" by the Rev. B. Kurtz, D. D. We believe that they contain a correct statement of the general views entertained in the Lutheran Church in the United States, in reference to the important subjects to which they relate. We are gratified to learn that the author designs publishing them in a separate volume, and cordially recommend the contemplated work to our churches, and to all others who wish to obtain correct views respecting the character and position of American Lutheranism. We believe that the extensive circulation and perusal of this publication among our own people, will be the means of rectifying many mistakes and diffusing correct information in regard to Lutheranism; and that its general distribution will also tend to the prevention and removal of unfounded prejudices, in the case of many candid and serious persons of other denominations, who are willing to investigate before they censure and condemn.

[The above document was signed by the following gentlemen:]

REV. CHARLES MARTIN,
" J. B. RECK,
" GEO. YBAGER,
" JOHN BACHMAN, D. D.
" R. WEISER,
" E. KELLER,
" F. R. ANSPACH,
" S. EICHELBERGER,
" JOHN HECK,
" J. Z. SENDERLING,
" CHARLES WEYL,
" JOHN G. MORRIS, D. D.
" W. A. PASSAVANT,
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" D. MILLER,
" S. W. HARKEY,
" JOHN ULRICH,
" JOHN C. HOPE,
" P. A. STROBEL.
" C. P. KRAUTH, D. D., Pres. Pa. College.

# INTRODUCTION.

THE design of DR. KURTZ'S book is sufficiently indicated by its title. Those of us who are members of the Lutheran church, will properly appreciate a small work on this subject, calculated alike for the common reader and the more learned inquirer after ecclesiastical truth. It is a fact well known and seriously felt by us, that our views and usages have been extensively misunderstood. Most of our fellow christians in this country, not familiar with us from observation, have formed their opinions of our doctrines and liturgical practices from the erroneous statements of writers who have not carefully investigated the subject. We have been identified with the neologists of Germany, because some few bearing our distinctive ecclesiastical name have departed from the faith;—we have been represented as differing least of all other Protestants from popery in several important particulars, when the truth is, that no branch of the church of Christ on earth, has, ever since the Reformation, opposed "the man of sin" with more learning, energy and success than our own.

Dr. Schmucker's valuable "Popular Theology" has contributed much to remove wrong impressions from the minds of many intelligent readers, and the Lutheran Observer with its extensive circulation still continues to exhibit us in a true light. Multitudes of fellow believers of other communions now cordially fraternize

with us, having learned our real character, and from many quarters we are invited to co-operate in enterprises of general benevolence, thus receiving evidence that enlightened christians entertain a favourable judgment of us. This is only mentioned to show that the erroneous opinions respecting our doctrines and practices formerly so prevalent, have been abandoned by numerous intelligent christians, but it is equally certain that even such men would be pleased to see a full exhibition of all our distinctive features; and such they have in this book.

Those who know nothing of us, can here learn every thing that is desirable to know, and those who know us well, will be pleased to find the whole matter so conveniently arranged.

This book is designed not only for those who desire to learn our "ways," but for our own people also. Many of them need to be instructed in the faith of their fathers, that they may be more comforted by the truth, and better able to defend themselves against the attacks of proselyting sectarians. This book will furnish them with all they require for this purpose. They as well as those of our people who are well grounded in the faith will find it profitable to loan it to their neighbours of other communions, not with a view of winning them over to the church of the Reformation, but of informing them accurately as to our doctrines and usages.

We bear an honourable distinctive name, but still we were not baptized in the name of Luther. Christ Jesus crucified is our only hope of salvation. We enjoy invaluable church privileges, but still our system teaches us to exercise the utmost charity towards others. Our economy is so liberal, and evangelical, that it allows us to

differ on unessential matters of faith, whilst we are all firmly united in the maintenance of the fundamental and distinguishing doctrines of the Gospel. The consequence is, that our Synodical meetings do not present disgraceful scenes of theological contention, and personal strife engendered by charges of heresy, nor is our harmony disturbed by discussions of subjects which are rather political than ecclesiastical. We are not divided into numerous opposing sects or factions, nor annoyed by the accusations of lovers of strife against their equally orthodox brethren. *The Lutheran church has never, since the Reformation, engendered sects.* Differences of opinion have existed, but no *distinct party* or sect, has gone out from her communion, to disturb her tranquillity and revile her ministry. All the numerous sects that now afflict the church, have had other parentage than *Lutheranism.* They are not the children of the mother church of the Reformation. In this we glory and attribute the remarkable fact to the enlightened liberality of our economy, to the christian excellency of our fundamental confession, and to the ardent attachment of our people to our venerable institutions.

JOHN G. MORRIS.

# CHAPTER I.

## WHY ARE YOU A LUTHERAN?

"Be ready always to give an answer,* to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

1 *Pet.* iii. 15.

THE writer of this professes to be a Christian,—a Lutheran Christian. At an early age his attention was directed to the subject of religion, and having, as he humbly trusts, been brought under the renewing influence of the gospel, and embraced a hope of salvation, he became a member of the Evangelic Lutheran Church. He flatters himself that he did not act precipitantly; on the contrary, he reflected long and seriously; diligently sought instruction, and above all, consulted God in fervent and importunate prayer. Having availed himself of all the means within his reach to obtain light and direction, and especially attended

*A literal translation of the Greek word rendered *answer*, would be *apology*, which signifies *defense;* and from this we have the true meaning of the word *apology* as used by the primitive fathers. Their vindications of Christianity were usually entitled *apologies*, by which they meant not *excuses*, according to the modern import of the term, but *defenses*.

a series of lectures explanatory of Luther's shorter Catechism,* he deliberately propounded himself to the Council† as a candidate for membership in the church specified, and was subsequently received by the solemn rite of Confirmation. Many years have rolled round since that interesting and impressive season; and now, that age, experience and no small amount of reading and observation have come to his aid, he hesitates not to declare, that the recollection of no scene in his life affords purer pleasure, and in his judgment, furnishes juster ground of gratitude to God, than that at which his baptismal vows were thus personally and

*This Catechism, prepared by Luther himself, is an admirable compend of Christian doctrine and morals, embracing the cardinal principles of religion with appropriate explanations. The Lutheran church lays great stress on the religious instruction of the young, and especially requires all candidates for membership to attend a course of instruction by the pastor, based upon the Catechism and continued from two or three to five or six months. No one under ordinary circumstances is excused from attending this course, unless the pastor is satisfied that he possesses a sufficient measure of religious knowledge without it; and even in this case it is deemed best not wholly to neglect it.

†The officers in Lutheran churches are called *elders* and *deacons;* sometimes *trustees* are added to whom the management of the temporal property is committed. All together, are denominated the *Church Council*, of which the pastor is *ex-officio* a member, and in many cases the presiding officer.

publicly assumed and ratified, and the enjoyment of Christian privileges in the church of his early choice was secured.

"WHY ARE YOU A LUTHERAN?"—why not rather a member of some other religious community?—What do you Lutherans believe? what are your doctrines, government, discipline, and usages?—wherein do you differ from other Protestant denominations? and what especially is the foundation of your hope as a member of the Lutheran church?—Again and again have such interrogatories been proposed to me; and mindful of the apostolic requisition, "to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in me," I replied according to the ability I possessed; and have reason to believe that in some instances at least, the reply proved satisfactory. In the hope of rendering it more extensively useful, I herewith offer it for publication. May the Lord graciously smile upon this feeble effort to subserve his cause; may he own and sanction it; and by his blessing, without which nothing can prosper, make it instrumental in inducing many who are doubting to declare without further hesitancy on the side of God; in strengthening the faith of the

wavering; and establishing and building up in godliness all who, like the writer, have cast in their lot with Christ's people in that branch of his kingdom which is distinguished by the name of the illustrious Saxon Reformer.

"*Why are you a Lutheran?*—I have sometimes answered this inquiry by proposing another, viz: Why should I not be a Lutheran? to which it has been rejoined: Because Lutherans are only half reformed, and of all Protestants differ least from Roman Catholics; they believe in consubstantiation, have private confession and their ministers forgive sins; they teach that baptism is regeneration and practise exorcism at its celebration; they have images in their churches, substitute catechisation and confirmation for conversion, &c. If these and kindred charges were true, I confess that it would be no easy task to furnish an "answer," or a satisfactory *defense* of "the hope that is in me;" but not one of them is founded in fact. True, Lutherans regard the holy sacraments as means of grace, and believe that by the blessing of God, they may become instrumental in regenerating the sinner; they maintain that Christ is present in an especial manner at the holy supper to bless the humble

communicant: but this view differs essentially from that imputed to them.* They also have a form of confession and absolution that is used in public worship preparatory to the eucharist: but the absolution is no more than a simple announcement of *the promise of God* to pardon the truly contrite, and of his determination eternally to punish the finally impenitent.† As to images, exorcism, and putting catechisation and confirmation for conversion; such accusations are unworthy of serious refutation. No people on earth entertain greater abhorrence of image worship and other Romish superstitions, and insist more strenuously on sound conversion and purity of heart and life than Lutherans. Catechisation however, is held in high esteem as a means of religious

*"The Lutheran church does not believe in impanation, nor in subpanation, nor in consubstantiation; nor in a physical or material presence of the body and blood of the Saviour." So says the great historian, Mosheim in his Dog. Theology.

†In that excellent little volume, entitled "Portraiture of Lutheranism," by Prof. Schmucker, D. D. the author remarks, p. 47. "In the numerous Lutheran liturgies we have seen, including those of Sweden and Norway, the minister never professes to forgive sins, nor even to announce the divine promises of pardon unconditionally to all; but limits them to *truly penitent believers*, whilst the impenitent and unbelieving are expressly told that God will not pardon their sins, but *inflict deserved punishment on them.*"

instruction, and confirmation as an impressive and appropriate mode of public recognition of church-membership, and in this view no intelligent and pious man, it is presumed, will object to or speak lightly of them. As all the foregoing charges are accordingly false, and may be regarded as the groundless imputations of ignorance or bigotry, or hostility to the truth, they can in nowise operate as a barrier to my Lutheranism, or in any degree weaken my attachment to the church of my preference.*

But it is time to reply more explicitly to the question proposed. I remark then, THAT I AM A LUTHERAN.

I. Because I most heartily approve of the great fundamental principle of Lutheranism, which is, that the inspired Writings, "without note or comment" and apart from all human

*Those who have contributed most to disseminate erroneous notions respecting the Lutheran church, are the publishers of Buck's Theological Dictionary, Mr. Goodrich in his Eccles. History, and Hannah Adams in her Dictionary of all Religions. Lutherans do not acknowledge these as standard works, and have already sufficiently protested against their misrepresentations, so far as Lutheran doctrines and usages are concerned. Surely it is time for publishers and authors to abandon those stereotyped aspersions. As for private individuals who occasionally repeat them in a newspaper article or from the pulpit, they are entitled to pity more than contempt, since charity bids us attribute their course to want of intelligence rather than wilful calumny.

tradition, are the only unerring source of religious knowledge, and the only infallible rule of Christian faith and practice. The Lutheran church regard the Bible as so plain and easy to be understood in all that is essential to salvation, that its signification may be learned without the aid of an expositor, by every person of common sense, who is able to read it. This glorious principle was boldly asserted, nobly contended for, and triumphantly vindicated and established by Luther; and subsequently adopted by all Lutheran churches throughout Christendom. It is now happily recognized in every branch of the Protestant church, but no where does it receive a more cordial assent than among Lutherans. Should it be objected that like other denominations, Lutherans have in addition to the Word of God, their *symbolical books*;* I would remark

*By symbolical books are understood, standard compends of christian doctrine, or summaries of the articles of religion, such as creeds, confessions, catechisms, &c. Those of the Lutheran church, adopted in the year 1580, are in general, the so-called Apostles' creed, the Nicene creed, the Athanasian confession, (whereby the church established her identity with the primitive ages,) the Augsburg confession by Melancthon presented in 1530, the Defense of this confession by the same writer, the Smalcald articles by Luther, his Catechisms, and the Form of Concord. But strictly speaking, the Augsburg Confession alone is usually regarded as *the sole symbolical book of the Lutheran church.*

that those books have no authority beyond what they derive from the scriptures of truth, whose sense and meaning they are designed to convey. They contain the prominent doctrines of the Bible as understood by Lutherans, methodically arranged for the sake of perspicuity, but are binding no farther than as they faithfully set forth the revealed mind of the Holy Spirit. The principal of these writings is the Augsburg Confession, and even in relation to that, no more is required even of ministers at their ordination than to believe, that "the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are taught in a manner substantially correct, in its doctrinal articles." The other symbolical summaries are not referred to at all at the admission either of private members or of ministers. I remark further, that I am a Lutheran

II. Because all the prominent doctrines of God's Word are distinctly taught in the Lutheran church. These are

1. The doctrine of the *Trinity*, or that God is *one* in *being* but *three* in *persons;* in other words, that there is but one divine essence, possessing all the perfections of Supreme Deity, and yet three distinct persons who are

of the same essence, and therefore possessing the same perfections, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This doctrine is a profound mystery, but plainly revealed in the Bible, and as plainly asserted in the symbolical books of the Lutheran church.

2. *The universal depravity of mankind.* The Augsburg Confession teaches, that all men "are born with a depraved nature; that is, without the fear of God, or confidence towards him, but with sinful propensities."

3. *The proper and eternal Deity of Jesus Christ.* This is implied in the doctrines of the Trinity, but it is also separately insisted upon with great perspicuity in the symbolical books.

4. *The atonement by the death of Christ.* The Confession and other standard authorities teach, that the great object of Christ's crucifixion was not to seal his doctrines with his blood or to exhibit an example of resignation, but to make a full and complete atonement for the sins of the world. His death was accordingly vicarious in its nature, unlimited in its extent, and restricted in its application only by the obstinate and final unbelief of sinners.

5. *The true divinity and office of the Holy*

*Spirit.* The third person in the adorable Trinity is affirmed to be God equal with the Father and Son, and while man is declared to be wholly unable by his own reason or natural powers, to believe in or come to Christ, the Spirit is represented as "calling him by the gospel, enlightening him by his gifts, and sanctifying and preserving him in the true faith."

6. *Justification by faith.* This was the grand point on which the reformation mainly hinged, the great centre around which the whole work revolved; it was "first among the foremost" of the fundamental doctrines taught and insisted upon by the Master-spirit. He rescued it from the corruptions of Romanism, and having thus cleansed it from the human inventions thrown around it by popery, proclaimed it anew in all its gospel simplicity and native sublimity. It is still cherished among Lutherans as the richest legacy of the Reformation, and as concentrating the quintessence of all scriptural truth. "Men cannot," says the Confession, "be justified before God by their own strength, merit or works; but they obtain forgiveness and are justified by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith."

7. *Good works, involving purity of heart*

*and life.* The Confession requires an active faith, a faith that produces obedience and holy living. "This faith must bring forth good fruits; and it is our duty to perform those good works which God has commanded, because he has enjoined them, and not in the expectation of thereby meriting justification before him."

8. *The ministerial office and means of grace.* On this important subject, the language of the Confession is: "In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministerial office has been instituted, whose members are to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments.* For through the instrumentality of the word and sacraments, as means of grace, the Holy Spirit is given, who in his own time and place, produces faith in those who hear the gospel message, namely, that God, for Christ's sake, and not on account of any merit in us, justifies those who believe in Christ."

9. Concerning *the future judgment and world of retribution,* the Confession teaches that Christ will come again to judge the world; that he will then raise the dead, the wicked as well as the righteous; that upon the latter he

*Lutherans teach that there are but two institutions entitled to the appellation of sacraments, viz: baptism and the eucharist.

will bestow everlasting life, but the former with apostate angels he will punish with eternal destruction.

These are the cardinal doctrines of the Scriptures; they are emphatically "the doctrines of the Reformation," which all the great Reformers, with Luther at their head, eloquently vindicated and boldly and triumphantly inculcated. I most devoutly believe that every one of them is plainly set forth in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the writings of his apostles; and all combined, I am firmly convinced, comprehend every article of faith essential to conversion and salvation. He that sincerely receives them as God's inspired truth, and lives in accordance with them; in other words, every one who by the power of the Holy Ghost is brought under their regenerating and sanctifying influence, will most certainly be pardoned and saved with an unutterable and ever-during salvation.

I cannot but revere the man whom God himself honored as the chosen instrument to restore those heaven-born truths to an ignorant, deluded and corrupt world; who hazarded reputation and life to snatch them from the deep obscurity of superstition and human clogs

in which they had been inhumed, and who triumphantly held them up once more in their primitive purity to his admiring cotemporaries and all succeeding generations. I love that branch of the church called by his name, the first-begotten of the Reformation, the earliest to adopt and promulgate these divine truths, and still holding to them, still teaching them in all their pulpits, and instilling them into the young by means of catechetical instruction. It was by hearing them explained and enforced that God in mercy opened my eyes, alarmed my conscience, and taught me to look to Calvary for deliverance from the guilt and bondage of sin, and finally blessed me with a hope which I would not exchange for ten thousand worlds like the one I now inhabit.

So far then as *articles of faith* are concerned, I may confidently ask, *why should I not be a Lutheran?* Is there any thing like Romanism or Pelagianism, or Unitarianism, or Universalism, or fanaticism, or any other species of error or heresy in the foregoing principles? May I not without hesitancy and with all safety trust my immortal interests to a firm and personal belief in them? Is there a Christian on earth who can doubt my final sal-

vation while I truly believe and live under their legitimate influence? May I not then, with full assurance of inheriting eternal life, remain in the church of which I am a member and cleave to her with my latest breath?

But it may be said that these tenets are not peculiar to Lutheranism, but are held in common by all orthodox Protestant churches:—be it so; so far I revere and love all orthodox Protestant churches, and invoke God's richest blessings on them. But the Lutheran church is the one that first brought them to light from the dark depths of Romish corruption; that first made me acquainted with them; in which they were blessed to my conversion, and in which I still hear them expounded and inculcated with a clearness, sincerity and earnestness not surpassed in any other denomination. *Why then should I not be a Lutheran?*

## CHAPTER II.

I AM A LUTHERAN IN THE THIRD PLACE,—

III. Because I heartily approve of *the Government of the Lutheran church.* There are various forms of church-polity in the christian world, viz.

1. *The Patriarchal or Metropolitan.* This is the system of the Greek or Eastern church, which may be reckoned the largest as to extent of empire, having a considerable wider compass of territory than the Latin or Romish with all the numerous conflicting sects comprehended in it;—so that the latter is chargeable with a glaring impropriety in assuming to itself the distinctive epithet of *catholic* or universal. The Greek church is governed by patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, bishops, archimandrites,* abbots, priests &c.

2. *The Papal.* This system subjects both church and state to the dominion of *one erring mortal,* residing in the city of Rome. This two-fold autocratic usurpation, the pope and his numerous coadjutors are most sedulously

*These are the directors of convents.

seeking to extend over our Protestant churches and states as they have done over their own.

3. *The Lutheran.* Of this I shall speak more at large in the sequel.

4. *The Episcopal.* This system excludes the Pope of the Latin, and the Patriarchs of the Greek church; but maintains that its bishops are the regular and legitimate successors of the apostles, and constitute by divine authority a distinct and superior order of clergy. Those who differ from this view are called *Low-church-men.* In England the occupant of the throne is acknowledged as the supreme earthly head of the church, and it is governed by archbishops, bishops, deans, archdeacons &c.

5. *The Presbyterian,* which rejects prelacy, and insists on the parity of ministers, the cooperation of ruling elders in its government, and the union of all its churches under one revising and controlling judicatory, denominated the General Assembly, which is composed of delegates from the Presbyteries and meets annually for the transaction of business. It is governed by Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and the General Assembly.

6. *The Congregational,* which agrees with

the Presbyterian in holding to the parity of ministers, but differs in that it teaches that each church is in itself an independent body,* possessing all the powers of government in its own members and pastor, and that the jurisdiction of each church over itself is final. Of course, each church is governed by itself in its own primary capacity.

There are indeed other systems differing more or less from the foregoing, viz. the Methodist, Baptist, German Reformed &c., but they are mere modifications, and in their radical features may all be resolved into one or the other of those just mentioned.

The Lutheran form of government varies from all the preceding; it however strongly resembles in some of its aspects the Presbyterian system, and in others that of the Independent or Congregational churches. Like the Presbyterian it has church-officers termed elders and deacons, who constitute a Council, answering to the Presbyterian *Session*, but those officers are elected only for a term of years. It also acknowledges Special Conferences, Synods, and a General Synod; but all these are regarded rather as *advisory* bodies

*Hence their churches are frequently termed "*Independent*."

than as *judicatories*, though they are sometimes called judicatories in opposition to the views of a portion of the church. The General Synod especially, to which I shall have occasion again to refer, is universally acknowledged to be clothed with none other than recommendatory power. In these respects the ecclesiastical bodies of the Lutherans bear most analogy to the Consociations of the Congregational churches of New England. Lutherans in common with others, believe that all power is originally centered in Jesus Christ, the Great Head of the Church; but they maintain that he has delegated authority to govern it to the people, that is, to individual churches, who are required to employ that authority in accordance with the general principles taught in the New Testament. Hence every individual church elects and dismisses its own minister, fixes the amount of his salary, frames its own discipline &c. independently of any coercive synodical control.—The synod, within whose boundary a congregation is located and of which its minister is a member, may *advise* but desires not to *force*. If however, either pastor or people violate the established fundamental principles of Lutheranism, they may be ex-

cluded from membership in the synod and be declared to be no longer *Lutheran*. In conformity to this view, individual churches claim the original right of administering discipline, and may try and decide cases in their primary congregational capacity. This was to some extent the custom some thirty or forty years ago, but of late most if not all the churches have delegated this right to the officers so that at present the discipline is administered in the name of the church by its Council. An appeal from the decision of the Council may be carried up to the district synod, who may either confirm said decision or advise a review of the case, or appoint a special committee for that purpose. But as this subject will claim attention hereafter, I shall pass on, with this single remark, that in most of these features I apprehend the Lutheran form of government and discipline approximates nearest to that of the Congregational.

Before I enter more into detail I must premise, that one grand general principle adopted by Lutherans throughout the world is, that as the Great Head of the church designed his religion for all nations of every variety of civil institutions, he did not prescribe any *entire*

*specific system* of government, but simply laid down a few fundamental principles, and left the churches to fill up the outline as might seem best calculated under varied circumstances to carry out those principles and secure the peace and prosperity of the several departments of his kingdom. Accordingly we find, that the government of the Lutheran church, while it is one and the same throughout the world in its *radical features*, has assumed diverse aspects in different countries and under varied forms of political government. Thus, in Sweden and Denmark the church is governed partly by prelates; in different portions of Germany by superintendents, consistorial-counsellors, inspectors &c.; and in our own country by church-councils, conferences, and synods. In all these modifications it embraces *first*, all those cardinal principles and precepts of permanent and universal obligation which are contained in the New Testament; and *secondly*, such other additional or subordinate regulations as have appeared to be best adapted to the genius of the political arrangements of the country, and calculated most successfully to advance the cause of Christ. The principal characteristics of the government of

the Lutheran church in the United States, are

1. The parity of Ministers;
2. Church-Councils;
3. Special Conferences;
4. District Synods; and
5. The General Synod.

1. *The parity of ministers.* By this I mean the perfect equality of rank, *by divine right*, of all the incumbents of the ministerial office. This doctrine was held and strenuously maintained by Luther in the face of the long established and formidable hierarchy of Rome; and nearly all the other Reformers also adopted it. Lutherans are still as much as ever persuaded that there is no law of divine authority which points out a distinction between the ministers of the gospel with respect to rank, dignity or prerogative, and hence they still recede in all countries from diocesan episcopacy, except *jure humano*, that is, except by *human* law. It has already been observed, that in two or three of the Northern kingdoms they have bishops, and in Germany, superintendents &c.; but this does not trench upon the paramount principle of *parity*, because even in those countries these modifications are

advocated only on grounds of human expediency, whilst the primitive equality of rank is universally conceded. Moreover, the term bishop in the kingdoms above alluded to, is entirely divested of the mystic idea of higher or holier dignity so commonly attached to it in Rome, England, and some parts of our own country. So also in Prussia, the king lately conferred the title of bishop on a few of his favorites; but this was done altogether for political purposes, and with a view to reward those who had distinguished themselves by their surpassing loyalty. The mere title and the little brief authority connected with it amount to scarcely anything, and are not pretended to be derived, in the sense in which they have been bestowed, from any specific precept or example recorded in the sacred scriptures. This trait of ministerial equality in the character of the Lutheran church, is one which I exceedingly admire; I am perfectly convinced that it characterized the primitive church, and is plainly taught in God's holy Word: I know that it is a favorite principle of Lutheranism, and hence it constitutes one among many reasons why I prefer being a Lutheran.

2. *Church-Councils.* The Council is the lowest delegated authority of the church; it consists of elders and deacons, and also in some instances of trustees, all elected by the members of the church for a limited period of time; the pastor is a permanent member by virtue of his office. Besides managing the temporal concerns of the church, and attending to other duties, the Council are required to see to the religious instruction of the young, to aid the minister at the celebration of the eucharist, in visiting the sick, and especially in administering the discipline.

3. *Special Conferences.* These are subdivisions of synods, consisting of three or more ministers residing contiguously, who meet as often as convenient in each others congregations to hold meetings for two or three days or longer, with a view to awaken and convert sinners, and to edify believers by close practical preaching. Each minister may bring with him a lay-delegate. Ecclesiastical business appertaining to the district in which they may reside may be attended to by them, but they never license or ordain candidates for the ministry unless authorized by an express vote of the synod.

4. *District Synods.* A district synod is a body of ministers, with an equal number of lay-delegates, residing within a certain district, convened for the transaction of business. The duty of each synod is thus set forth in the *Formula, &c.*, for the government of the church: "To see that the rules of government and discipline prescribed in this Formula, are observed by all the congregations and ministers within their bounds, to receive appeals from decisions of church-councils, and of special conferences when regularly brought before them, and review and reverse or confirm the decisions to which they refer; to examine and decide on all charges against ministers and licentiates, that of heterodoxy alone excepted; to form and change ministerial districts; to attend to any business relating to their churches, which is regularly brought before them, to provide supplies for destitute congregations, and to devise and execute all suitable measures for the promotion of piety and the general prosperity of the church, not otherwise disposed of in this Formula."

There is connected with every District synod a *Ministerium*, composed exclusively of the pastors or ordained ministers of the synod,

which usually holds its sessions immediately after the adjournment of synod, for the purpose of attending to those duties which belong more immediately to their province, such as examination, licensure and ordination of candidates for the ministry. All charges of heresy against a minister, as also appeals from the decision of a church-council on a charge of heresy against a layman, or from the decision of a special conference on a similar charge against a minister, are to be examined and decided by the Ministerium.

5. *The General Synod.* This body, which meets biennially or every two years, consists of an equal number of clerical and lay-delegates, from all those district synods which have attached themselves to it. It is exclusively an advisory body, and is intended to be a general bond of union of all the synods of the whole church, and to promote the general interests of the same.

Great exception has been taken to the General Synod, on the ground that it tends to centralization, is designed to usurp undue authority, &c. But these apprehensions appear to be wholly gratuitous, as must be manifest to every unbiassed and intelligent mind, because

it is altogether a voluntary union of synods, from which they may recede whenever they think proper, and by the express provisions of its constitution, can never transcend the humble privilege of *proffering advice.* If there be any well grounded objection to it, it is to be found in the entire want of authority, which renders it a less efficient instrumentality for good than it might be. The very synods that have inveighed most against it and affected to evince most alarm at its putative assumptions, absolutely possess and exercise more power than the General Synod. As for those individuals who have labored to fill the public mind with suspicions and hostility to this body, it is to be feared that their opposition proceeds less from just conviction than from want of information or some other more questionable motive. I would fain hope that the absence of correct intelligence may be the most frequent cause of their antipathy.

The General Synod has already tended to harmonize district synods and promote unity of sentiment and action in relation to the paramount interests of the church; and had it not been resisted would have proven instrumental in uniting all the churches in the bonds of inti-

mate christian affection. But the great amount of positive good that it has accomplished by its wise deliberations and judicious counsels, I shall not attempt to detail; the circumscribed limits to which I must confine myself forbid it. The Lutheran church in the United States is now, and has been for a number of years, enjoying the inestimable fruits of its benign and propitious influence. To its wholesome advice and efficient action the church is indebted for the establishment of Pennsylvania College and the Theological Seminary at Gettysburg; and whose pen is endowed with sufficient eloquence to set forth all the blessings that have already resulted to individuals, the church and the world from those invaluable institutions? Those blessings are indeed in process of development from day to day, and from year to year, and the whole church is rejoicing in the rich fruition, but they can never be adequately estimated until the bright blazing light of eternity shall shine upon and fully exhibit them. The Lutheran church is favored with two hymn books, prepared for public and social worship, the one German, and the other English; both evangelic and deeply spiritual, which have been blessed to the edification, encouragement

and salvation of unnumbered souls. The latter especially is not inferior in judicious adaptation and in every variety of excellence, to any other hymn book extant. To the General Synod the church is indebted for both these inappreciable additions to its stock of devotional and religious books. It was the General Synod that first commenced seriously deliberating on the subject of establishing a foreign Lutheran missionary station among the Heathen; at this very moment it is pursuing measures for the accomplishment of this important purpose, and before these remarks shall meet the public eye, such a station will have been founded in East India. The Parent Education Society and the Central Domestic Missionary Society, with their numerous comely and prosperous progeny of auxiliaries, are the blessed offspring of the General Synod. The cause of Sunday Schools, of Temperance, and indeed of every unequivocally benevolent and religious enterprize receives its sanction, and seems to flourish under its gentle, fostering auspices. Entirely destitute of *power* as it is of *inclination* to burden the conscience, to oppress or even encroach upon the rights of synods, churches or individuals,

it posseses capacity only for purposes of good, and that exclusively in the way of devising, projecting and recommending such purposes. It cannot by its constitution, and desires not according to its spirit, to enforce its counsels. Its proceedings therefore are the benignant admonitions and affectionate recommendations of a kind and tender parent, who exerts all his salutary influence by *love,* wholly apart from coercion. Such is the General Synod of the Lutheran church. No wonder that it has met with the approbation of distinguished and pious Lutheran divines in Germany and elsewhere, and that nearly all the most effective and zealous Lutheran district synods in the United States have passed resolutions commendatory of its character and design, have voluntarily come forward and sought fellowship with it, and now feel free and happy in the connection. The only marvel is, that an ecclesiastical body with no other but advisory power, should have been able in so short a period to effect so much good, and that too in the very face of antagonistic men and even synods, who took every occasion to disparage it, and to alarm the fears of the timid and fill the minds of the confiding with prejudice and op-

position. Those very men knew, or certainly might have known, if they had taken the pains to inform themselves, that their hostility to the General Synod was based upon misconception or unreasonable prepossession; and hence, that all their adverse efforts were, to say the least, a mere display of words full of sound and fury signifying nothing. It is to be hoped that they will ere long discover their error and change their course; the honest and conscientious portion of them can hardly fail to reach this result, and then the Lutheran church will present, in its General Synod, one broad and undivided front to all the enemies of Christ and his cause. In the meantime let that noble body go on as it has heretofore done, suggesting and encouraging plans, and proposing ways and means for the promotion of Christian benevolence and vital godliness, and the Lord's blessing will continue to abide upon it and to prosper it, notwithstanding the exertions of its adversaries. The good it has thus far effected, has been achieved, not by arrogating to itself undue power, but by the exercise of moral suasion. Its efforts and projects for usefulness have commended themselves so strongly to the enlightened conscience and renewed

heart of the friends of Lutheranism, and been in such obvious accordance with the good pleasure of the Master, that, as the former could not but approve, so the latter could not but impart his benediction. And this is the secret of the success and felicitous results of the General Synod. Good men sanctioned and God smiled upon its pious doings, and hence its efficient agency in advancing all the great interests of the Lutheran church.

Thus have I endeavored to furnish a correct sketch of the order of government of the Lutheran church in the United States; and I hesitate not to assert, that I see much in it to admire and but little if any thing to object to.

It is simple, equitable and scriptural, and withal, in perfect consonance with the principles of our political institutions. As this church holds the essential doctrines of Christianity with fewer appended peculiarities than most other denominations, so she has a system of government, which I verily believe, approaches as near to that of the primitive church and the general principles prescribed in the New Testament as any other. With the Presbyterians she has ruling elders and synods to take a part in her ecclesiastical af-

fairs; but unlike that revered church, her elders are elected periodically, and her synods are rather *advisory* than *judicatory*. Like the Congregationalists, the church, that is, the ministers and all the members of each individual church, possess the power to administer the discipline; but unlike that active and benevolent body, this power is in most instances delegated to the church-officers.

Agreeing with both these distinguished departments of the household of faith, she holds with unyielding tenacity to the parity of ministers, believing most devoutly and literally the declaration of the Saviour: "For one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." Matthew, xxiii. 8.

Like the Methodists, who have introduced limited episcopacy and presiding eldership wholly on the ground of expediency, so the Lutheran church in the north of Europe has her prelates, and farther south, her superintendents and inspectors, on the very same ground, and because these arrangements were deemed to be most pertinent to the political establishments of those countries. Thus, a partial resemblance and a partial discrepancy might be traced between the Lutheran polity and that

of most other orthodox denominations; so that it may justly be said to be *eclectic* in its nature, adjusting into a regular and harmonious whole, all the best features found in other churches, and setting aside those of doubtful utility to make room for others entitled to a preference. Even that link in the chain of government, which has been the ground of so much objection, on the one hand on the score of *too much power*, and on the other, of *too little power*, I mean the General Synod, is ascertained after all to be perhaps as judiciously contrived as any other. It is well known that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, which is emphatically an ecclesiastical court or tribunal, exercising supreme and final authority, has recently been convulsed to its very centre, and on account of its unwieldy bulk and excessive power, one of the most eminent and influential divines* of that church a few years ago proposed a re-organization of the church; recommending that the General Assembly should have only *advisory* power, and that the synods should have for their respective districts that final power now pos-

*The Rev. Dr. Alexander of Princeton; see Biblical Repository for 1832.

sessed by the former; thus making the General Assembly among Presbyterians precisely what the General Synod is among Lutherans. A higher compliment from a higher source could scarcely be paid to the system of Lutheran church government.

This system, while it guarantees to ministers equality of rank and privilege and protects them in all their just claims, abundantly secures to congregations and individual members every exercise of power and immunity to which they are entitled. If a minister is dissatisfied with his situation he can resign and locate himself elsewhere, and the congregation may dismiss him whenever a majority of two-thirds judge that the interests of the church require it. If accusations are preferred against the minister, the case is investigated by his peers in synod, where he has every opportunity for a fair and impartial trial, and where the interests of the congregation are also fully represented by an equality of lay-delegation; and if dissatisfied with the decision he may carry his trial up to the General Synod who may recommend a revision of the case. So also an individual member, if he feel aggrieved by the decision of the congregation of which he is a

member, or of its council, may appeal to the special conference, or synod, and thus secure a new trial. Thus I might retrace every item of this system and point out a propriety, equity and reciprocity of right not excelled in the economy of any other denomination. But its grand features have been sufficiently delineated, and I willingly submit the whole to the judgment of the unprejudiced reader, and leave him to decide whether I have not good cause for being a Lutheran? Let him review the doctrines and government of Lutheranism as exhibited, and I venture to say he will no longer inquire: *Why are you a Lutheran?* The system itself will furnish a most satisfactory and triumphant reply. That system teaches a universality of Christ's atonement, and in this respect Congregationalists, Methodists and most Presbyterians fall in with it. It maintains that justification is wholly by faith in Christ, and that salvation is from beginning to end the work of free, unmerited grace, and here all orthodox churches coincide with it. It has a liturgy and forms of prayer, and admits to membership by confirmation, and in this Episcopalians agree with it; but ministers and people are left free to use those forms or pray

*extempore*, and in this point of view the most serious objections urged by Methodists, Presbyterians, &c., are removed. It has its special conferences, which answer to the protracted meetings of some churches, and the quarterly conferences of others. It requires the regular indoctrination of the young by means of catechetical instruction, preparatory to admission by confirmation, and positively disapproves of administering this solemn rite to any who are not awakened to penitence and to a sincere desire and determination by the grace of God to flee from the wrath to come; and herein it harmonizes with the German Reformed. Its whole tendency is to exalt the Savior and humble the sinner, imputing all the glory of redemption to the former, and all the responsibility and blameworthiness of final condemnation to the latter. And is there no argument in all this to vindicate my Lutheranism? Can any reflecting man after this representation of Lutheran doctrine and church polity, wonder why I should be a member of the Lutheran church, or assign a single good reason why I should not cleave to it with my latest breath?

## CHAPTER III.

I AM A LUTHERAN IN THE FOURTH PLACE,—

IV. Because I regard *the Discipline of the* Lutheran church as *decidedly scriptural, and calculated to promote harmony, purity and spirituality.*

I have already had repeated occasion to refer incidentally to the Discipline of the church, and on that account, and also because of its intimate connection with the general government of the church, a subject already sufficiently discussed, I shall not occupy much time on this branch of the subject.

I must however reiterate the remark, that Lutherans believe that the right and duty of administering church discipline is primarily vested in individual churches, that is, that the minister and all the members of each individual church collectively possess the power to execute the discipline, by which I mean, the power to admonish and rebuke erring brethren, to receive new members, to censure or exclude unworthy ones, to restore penitents, &c. &c. But this power has in most instances been

surrendered to the officers of the church, called the church-council. The right of originally adopting a system of discipline, and of subsequently altering and amending or in any way modifying it, is still in many instances reserved to the church in its primary or congregational capacity. But when once introduced, its provisions are carried into effect in the name of the church by its legally elected officers, the elders and deacons.

In order to establish the position assumed above respecting the scriptural character and salutary influence of the discipline of the Lutheran church, little more is requisite than a simple expose of its general features and the mode of administering it, and hence I shall quote from the "Formula for the Government and Discipline," &c., as recommended and published by the General Synod.

1. *Elders and Deacons.*—The principal duties of Elders are to aid the pastor or pastors in administering the government and discipline of the church; to endeavor to preserve peace and harmony in the church; to visit the congregational schools, and promote the religious instruction of the children of the church; and to visit the sick and afflicted, and to aid in the

performance of such other duties as are incumbent on the church-council.

The duties of the Deacons' office are principally these: to lead an exemplary life as commanded in Scripture, to minister unto the poor, extending to their wants and distributing faithfully amongst them the collections which may be made for their use; to assist the pastor in the administration of the eucharist, to attend and render all necessary service at stated worship; to see that their minister receive a just and adequate support according to the commands of our Lord; to administer the temporal concerns of the church; and to aid in the performance of such other duties as are incumbent on the church-council. Both these officers are elected by the people, and it is their duty to feel the deepest interest in the advancement of piety among the members of the church, and to exert their utmost influence to promote it.

Those congregations which have been in the habit of having trustees, may, if they deem it expedient, still retain them, and continue to them such privileges as they may deem expedient.

2. *The Church-Council.*—This consists of

the pastor or pastors and all the elders and deacons (and also of the trustees if there be any) of a particular church.

The pastor, together with half the other existing members of the council, and in the necessary absence of the pastor, two-thirds of the remaining members of the council shall constitute a quorum.

But no business connected with the government or discipline of the church shall be transacted without the presence of the minister, unless his absence is unavoidable or voluntary, or the church be vacant. And when present the pastor shall be *ex officio* chairman.

The church-council shall have the superintendence of the temporal concerns of the church, and shall see that they are administered with wisdom, faithfulness and justice. They shall also elect a deputy to represent them at the annual synodical meeting.

It shall be the duty of the council to admit to membership adults, who shall make application, and whom on mature deliberation, they shall judge to be possessed of the qualifications hereafter specified. They shall be obedient subjects of divine grace—that is, they must either be genuine Christians, or satisfy the

church-council that they are sincerely endeavoring to become such. Also to admit to the communion of the church, all those who were admitted to church-membership in their infancy, and whom on like examination, they shall judge possessed of the above mentioned qualifications. No one shall be considered a fit subject for confirmation who has not previously attended a course of religious lectures, delivered by the pastor on the most important doctrines and principles of religion; unless the pastor should be satisfied that the applicant's attainments are adequate without this attendance. And when adults are admitted to membership, their baptism shall if possible be performed publicly before the church; and when members who were baptized in their infancy are admitted to full communion, they shall in the same public manner *confirm* their baptismal vows according to the form of confirmation customary in the church.

If any member of the church-council should conduct himself in a manner unworthy of his office, he may be accused before the council; and if found guilty, his case shall be referred to the whole church for decision.

It shall be the duty of the council to admin-

ister the discipline of the church, on all those whose conduct is inconsistent with their Christian profession, or who entertain fundamental errors. To this end they shall have power to cite any one of their church members to appear before them; and to endeavor to obtain other witnesses when the case may require it. It shall further be the duty of the council, when any member offends, first privately to admonish him, or, if necessary, to call him to an account; and when they shall deem these measures ineffectual, to suspend or excommunicate him; that is, to debar him from the privileges peculiar to church membership, according to the precepts of the New Testament laid down in this Formula. It shall also be their duty to restore those subjects of suspension or excommunication, to all the privileges of the church, who shall manifest sincere repentance. Every act of excommunication, or of restoration, may be published to the church, if deemed necessary by the majority of the council.

It shall be the duty of the church-council to watch over the religious education of the children of the church, and to see that they be occasionally collected for the purpose of being

taught the Catechism of the church, and instructed in the duties and principles of the Christian religion. The council of every church shall have the management of the school-house attached to that church, and shall be *ex officio* trustees of the same. They shall endeavor to obtain pious, well qualified and faithful teachers, and to see that the children of the church, as far as practicable, attend this school, and that they be there also taught the Catechism of the church, and in general the duties of religion. In all places where there is not yet a school-house attached to the church, they shall encourage the people and endeavor to have one erected. And no person shall teach in any of our congregational school-houses without the permission of the church-council.

In all cases of appeal from the decisions of the church-council, the council shall take no further measures grounded on their decision until the sentence has been reviewed by the synod. But if the decision appealed from be a sentence of suspension or excommunication, it shall immediately take effect and continue in force until reversed by the synod. And in every case of appeal, the church-council shall

send a detailed and correct account of their proceedings in the case, and of the charges and evidence on both sides.

3. *Church Members.*—These are such as are associated together for divine worship and the better attainment of the objects of the Christian institution, agreeably to the provisions of the discipline.

Every church member is amenable to the council, and must appear before them when cited, and submit to the discipline of the church regularly administered.

It is the duty of every church member to lead a Christian life: that is, to perform all the duties required of him or her in scripture. Thus it is the duty of adults to perform all the Christian duties, not to neglect the public worship of God; nor the participation of the Lord's Supper whenever an opportunity is afforded. It is the duty of parents to educate their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to teach them the doctrines of the church, and to subject them to the ordinances of the same. And when young members reach the years of maturity and have attained the natural ability to partake of the Lord's Supper in the manner commanded, it

is their duty to be worthy communicants at the Lord's table.

Any member being dissatisfied with the decision of the church-council relative to himself, may appeal to the Synod. But in every such case, the applicant shall give notice to the church-council of his intention, either immediately, or within two weeks of the time when the sentence was made known to him; and shall specify to them the reasons of his dissatisfaction and the ground of his appeal.

It is recommended, that when a member of one of our churches moves into the bounds of another, and wishes to be admitted to the privileges of the church, he shall bring with him a certificate of good standing from his former pastor.

It is recommended, as accordant with the principles of the New Testament, that the members of the church ought not to prosecute each other before a civil tribunal, until they have first made an attempt to settle their point of difference through the mediation of their Christian brethren.

4. *Elections.*—All congregational elections must be published to the congregation at least two weeks in advance.

The electors of any particular church in our connection, are all those who are in full communion with the same, who submit to the government and discipline regularly administered, and who contribute according to their ability and engagements to all its necessary expenditures.

At all elections for *Elders* or *Deacons*, no person may be elected to either of said offices who is not a member in full communion with said church.

When an election is held in a vacant congregation for a pastor, two-thirds of all the electors shall be necessary to an election, and if the votes were not unanimous, it is recommended that the presiding officer shall invite the minority to concur in the decision. He shall give the members a certificate, signed by himself, of the election. This certificate, with a statement of the support which they promise him, shall be a legal call to the pastor therein specified.

At elections for members of the church-council, the existing council shall nominate twice as many persons as are to be elected, and the church may nominate half as many more, from whom the officers may be chosen.

5. *Prayer-Meetings.*—As Prayer is one of the most necessary duties of a Christian, and as Prayer-meetings have been of the utmost importance and usefulness, it is therefore most earnestly recommended to the different churches in our connexion, to establish and promote them among our members. These meetings may be held in the church, school-house, or in private houses; and their object is the spiritual edification of the persons present; but the utmost precaution must ever be observed, that God, who is a Spirit, be worshipped in spirit and in truth—that they be characterized by that solemnity and decorum which ought ever to attend divine worship; and that no disorder be tolerated, or any thing that is calculated to interrupt the devotions of those who are convened, or prevent their giving the fullest attention to him who is engaged in leading the meeting,—in short, that according to the injunctions of the apostle, all things be done "decently and in order."

It is solemnly recommended to all church members, and more especially to the members of the council, to make daily worship in their family a sacred duty.

It is recommended that no one shall be per-

mitted in future to act as a sponsor, unless he or she be in full communion with the Christian church.

It is expedient that no person be permitted to preach in any of the churches in our connexion, except by consent of the pastor and council of said church, and in the absence of the pastor, by permission of the council.

The above exhibit of the general character of the discipline of the Lutheran church and the mode of executing it, is so plain and easy to be understood, that all comment is superseded. I shall accordingly not weary the reader by attempting any explanation. But I must be permitted to propose a few inquiries.

1. Is not this *discipline scriptural in its character?* If any one doubt, let him refer to the directions of our Lord and his apostles, as recorded in the gospel and the apostolic epistles, and I venture to assert his doubts will be speedily dissipated.* But if the discipline be

*For the purpose of aiding the reader in testing the biblical authority of the leading features of this system, I would refer him, among others, to the following passages: 1 Tim. viii. 13; Acts, vi. 2—6; Thess. v. 12, 13; Mark, xvi. 16; John, iii. 5; Acts, viii. 12, and xvi. 14, 15; 2 Cor. ii. 7; Gal. vi. 1; Titus, iii. 10; Matt. xviii. 17—18; Heb. x. 25; Col. iii. 16; Acts, ii. 46; Matt. xviii. 20; Exod. xx. 8; Psalms, lxxxiv. 2, 9, 11; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25; Eph.

scriptural; if it fully accord with those general principles on this subject laid down in the New Testament, is not this a sound reason why I should hold it in honor and esteem; why I should love it and advocate it, and *does it not furnish another substantial defence of my Lutheranism?*

2. Again, as divisions and contentions constitute one of the most serious evils that can prevail in a church, inasmuch as they embitter the life of the pastor, tend to defeat the blessed influence of the gospel and to banish the Holy Spirit from the hearts of the people; so peace and harmony and brotherly affection are exceedingly favorable to the success of a minister's labors and the promotion of piety. If then a prompt and prudent administration of any particular system of discipline has the effect to remove the aforesaid evil, to heal breaches, and restore kind feeling and harmonious cooperation, that system must be salutary in its influence. *Such is decidedly the case in reference to the system now under consideration.* It forbids the admission to membership of all

vi. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15; 1 Tim. v. 8; 1 Cor. ix. 14: Luke, x. 7; 1 Thess. v. 17; Luke, xviii. 1; Col. iv. 2; Acts, ii. 44; Eph. vi. 4; Acts, x. 9, 24; Jer. x. 25.

who are not "obedient subjects of grace," that is, "they must either be genuine Christians, or satisfy the church-council that they are sincerely endeavoring to become such." It requires the members of the church-council *to walk worthy of their office*, and in case of delinquency provision is made for the proper remedy. If any private member offend, it is made the duty of the officers "*privately to admonish him*," &c., and if such efforts, after having been repeatedly employed in the spirit of Christian affection, prove ineffectual, suspension must follow. The council are especially required to watch over the religious education of the children of the church, and to see that they be properly instructed in the doctrines and duties of the Christian religion. A congregational school is called for by the discipline, of which the council are *ex officio* the trustees, and under obligations to "endeavor to obtain *pious, well qualified and faithful teachers*." So soon as any person who has been suspended, sincerely repents, and affords satisfactory evidence of it, the council are bound to restore him to the church and the enjoyment of all its outward privileges, and to make the restoration known to the whole congregation.

I might greatly extend these remarks by a detailed review of the duties and relations of private members, and especially of the excellent recommendation not to prosecute each other before a civil tribunal, until they have first made proper attempts for an amicable adjustment through the mediation of their Christian brethren; also by a similar review of what is prescribed in reference to elections, prayer-meetings, &c. But the foregoing is sufficient for my purpose. I was anxious to show that the tendency of the discipline of the Lutheran church is eminently to heal divisions, make an end of strife and establish good will; and from what has been said it is manifest, that if its various provisions be judiciously and firmly executed, such must infallibly be the effect. No one can call this in question, who will take the trouble to examine those provisions in all their bearings. If however, disharmony nevertheless prevail in some Lutheran churches, it is unquestionably not for want of a sound and scriptural discipline, but rather in defiance of it, or because in all probability, that discipline is overlooked, or not faithfully executed, or peradventure wholly trodden under foot. There are possibly ministers who are in some

degree swayed by a timid, time-serving or man-fearing policy; or who are perhaps not sufficiently sustained by a firm and faithful council; or there may be a few arbitrary, domineering, purse-proud individuals in the church who have undertaken to brow-beat and lord it over both pastor and council, and have succeeded to some extent in keeping all in awe by their threats and their magisterial bearing. By such means the discipline may be shorn of its efficacy and laid low in the dust and in dishonor. No wonder if under such circumstances peace has departed and fear and heart-burnings and unkind feelings prevail. But let the discipline be restored and duly executed; let the pastor and his officers dare to assert their official rights; let all like "men good and true" come up prudently and affectionately to their duty and carry out the provisions of the excellent system elaborated from the Bible and furnished to their hands in all the simplicity and efficiency of gospel truth, and I feel assured the result will be most propitious. Strife will cease and good will and concord be brought back. God will be on the side of such a council, and bless their efforts for the peace of Jerusalem and the prosperity of Zion. Fully

convinced of the truth of these remarks, and knowing them to be founded in fact from my own experience, *I find in them cogent argument for my being a Lutheran.*

3. Finally, is not this system calculated *to promote the purity and spirituality of the church?* These are important attributes of God's church,—*purity* and *spirituality;*—his great design in establishing his kingdom on earth was to "*purify* unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works;"—a people peculiar for holiness of heart, of affection, temper, motive, yes, for holiness in the whole of their walk and conversation; whose religious services should not be formal and hypocritical, but sincere and spiritual. Let any unbiassed person look at the system of the Lutheran church, as presented above in its cardinal features, and then decide whether such must not be the character of its members, if that system be faithfully adhered to? It is unnecessary again to enter into detail; the system in its beautiful outline and in some of its subordinate regulations, lies before the reader; there it is; survey its entire portrait; look at it in all its evangelic provisions, its fair proportions, its fraternal spirit, its mild and forbearing, and yet

firm and decided requisitions; can any similar combination of rules and regulations for the government of individual churches, be more wisely arranged to secure *the purity and spirituality* of the members? All I ask, in connection with the faithful preaching of the doctrines of the church, and the faithful execution of her government; is a *faithful administration of her discipline*, and then I vouch without hesitancy for good order and harmony in synods and churches, for moral purity among her people, and deep spirituality in all the religious services of her members. Does any reasonable man after all this, still ask, "*Why are you a Lutheran?*" Can he find no satisfactory solution of the query in the preceding presentation of Lutheran doctrines, government and discipline?—then let him suspend his judgment a little longer; I still have much more to add, and do not yet despair of being able to satisfy him.

## CHAPTER IV.

I HAVE ASSIGNED FOUR GENERAL REASONS FOR BEING A LUTHERAN; MY FIFTH IS,—

V. *Because I admire the liturgical* economy of the Lutheran church.* By liturgical economy I understand the general system of ceremonies belonging to divine service. All who have written on liturgies agree, that in primitive days, divine service was exceedingly simple, clogged with very few ceremonies, and included but a small number of prayers. But by degrees the number of forms were augmented and new prayers and ceremonies were multiplied, with a view to increase the solemnity of divine worship and render it more imposing to the people. At length things were carried to such a pitch, that a regulation became necessary, and it was deemed proper to put the service and the manner of performing it into writing, and this was what was called a *liturgy.*

*The word liturgy is derived from the Greek *leiturgia*, which means "service or public ministry," formed of *leitos*, "public," and *ergon*, "work."

In accordance with the primitive practice and the true interests of vital godliness, the entire liturgical service of the Lutheran church is simple, brief and unostentatious.

Her mode of public worship on Lord's-day morning is as follows:

1. A hymn is sung.

2. The minister takes his stand at the communion table (usually termed the altar) within the balustrade which encircles the pulpit, and after a few introductory remarks, calls on the congregation to unite with him in a general confession of sin and prayer for pardon.

3. He next reads the gospel, or epistle, or both, appointed for that day; or if he prefer it, any other portion of Scripture selected by himself.

4. He closes the altar-service by reading a collect, or offering a very brief comprehensive *extempore* prayer, adapted to the Scripture he has read or to the public services of the day; and having announced another hymn, he ascends the pulpit.

5. On the pulpit he makes another prayer, preaches, prays and pronounces the benediction.

This mode of conducting public service is

perhaps as simple as it can possibly be, unless all form is totally dispensed with. And as there are those who are opposed to ceremonies of every description, it is left discretionary with ministers to omit the altar-service entirely, and to ascend the pulpit at once and arrange the order of the worship precisely as it is in the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist and some other churches: viz. 1. Singing; 2. Prayer; 3. *Reading a portion of Scripture; 4. Singing; 5. Sermon; 6. Prayer; 7. Singing; 8. Benediction. In the service of the afternoon and evening the liturgy is never used, and the order last mentioned is uniformly observed, with the exception that in some cases the reading of the Scripture lesson is omitted.

There is accordingly some diversity in the mode of conducting public service in Lutheran churches; some ministers using the liturgy while others do not. This want of uniformity has occasionally been a subject of complaint, and efforts have been made to remedy it, but without success. I am free to confess that I can see nothing in it to regret: the discrepancy refers only to a matter of form, and does

*The reading of Scripture sometimes occupies a different place in the arrangement, according to the inclination of the minister.

not touch or even come within reaching distance of essential truth; and it is right that in all such matters, churches and ministers should be left free to judge for themselves, and adopt that order which seems to them to be best calculated to promote the cause of religion. I cannot discover how any material advantage can possibly arise from perfect uniformity in the outward mode of public worship, whilst I can readily conceive, how great inconvenience and serious evil might accrue from the unvarying prevalence of such uniformity. I would therefore vastly prefer allowing to each pastor and church the privilege of managing the externals of divine service according to their own convictions, than attempt to prescribe a ritual for all and require undeviating adherence to it. And the fact that Lutheran ministers in connection with their churches actually possess and exercise this privilege, is in my judgment one of the glories of Lutheranism. It is this very fact that increases my veneration for the church, and elicits my admiration of her free republican principles. A perfect resemblance in all the minutiæ of outward worship, so far from being important, is not even desirable:—certainly not, if forced upon the churches by

*arbitrary enactments*, and if introduced *voluntarily*, there will be just ground to apprehend that one or the other of the extremes of indifferentism or bigotry has been the prompting motive.

The Lutheran churches are also provided with forms for the administration of all other permanent religious ordinances, such as the sacraments, licensure and ordination of ministers, confirmation, marriage, inauguration of church officers, &c. Those forms are all decidedly evangelic, spiritual, impressive and appropriate. Much has been said and written, and deservedly too, in praise of the spirit and admirable adaptation of the forms and prayers of the Protestant Episcopal church, contained in "the book of common prayer;" but I hazard nothing in saying that the liturgy of the Lutheran church would not suffer by a comparison with the "Prayer Book;" in fact, a considerable portion of the latter has been borrowed from the former.

But in virtue of the free and liberal spirit of Lutheranism, ministers and churches are not positively required to confine themselves to the letter of the liturgy. It is indeed recommended to them by synod, but they are at liberty to

use it or not, as they think proper. As it is however one of the very best of liturgies, profoundly imbued with sound gospel truth and deep spirituality, and wisely suited to the various occasions for which it is designed, it so powerfully commends itself to the judgment and heart that most of our ministers adhere very strictly to it, while a few for the purpose of diversifying the services and avoiding monotony in their ministrations, have prepared additional forms for their own use, or administer the ordinances of the church extemporaneously.

Now let any unprejudiced individual, not already committed in favor or against forms of religious service, take an enlarged view of the liturgical system of the Lutheran church, as exhibited in the above sketch, and then decide whether it is not entitled to reverence and affection? If a minister is an advocate of an evangelic and appropriate formulary, most happily arranged for the administration of every ordinance of God's house, he has it prepared to his hand and ready for use in every emergency. If he happen to be averse to such a formulary and prefer using his own premeditated or extempore effusions, he is at liberty

to do so. And even in this event he finds the liturgy of vast benefit as a general directory and as a means of supplying him with pertinent thought and expression. Verily, I admire the church that makes such ample provisions for the instruction and convenience of its ministry and people, and yet at the same time forbears to obtrude and force that provision upon the conscience of those concerned. I reverence the church that furnishes such important helps and facilities, and yet so delicately and carefully guards against invading the rights of private judgment, and trenching upon the liberty of individual ministers and congregations. Does any one then inquire, *Why are you a Lutheran?*—I refer him for an answer, in addition to what has been said in previous chapters, to the *Liturgical economy* of the church.

There is but one feature in the whole portraiture of this economy, which appears to me to be defective; and that has reference to the administration of the eucharist. I do not however allude to the "preparatory service," which usually takes place in the church on the day preceding the celebration of the Lord's Supper; by no means. On the contrary, I cher-

ish an especial regard for that; there is no part of the whole service which meets my wants more fully, falls in with my feelings more harmoniously and in which I engage more cordially than that. I would not for any consideration that it should be abolished, or modified, or in any degree interfered with. It is precisely the religious exercise that is most apposite to the occasion, and which every communicant ought to attend to, in public with the people of God, as well as in private in his closet.* No, what I refer to, is the mode of

* As the reader may not be acquainted with this preparatory service I will give him an outline of it: On the day preceding that on which the love of the Savior is to be commemorated, the pastor meets all the communicants in the house of God; after singing and praying, a practical discourse suited to the occasion is delivered. The object mainly aimed at is to awaken the hearers to sincere penitence and faith, by encouraging and aiding them in self-examination, in order to produce a sense of their unworthiness, to urge them to humble themselves before God and seek forgiveness in the blood of the Redeemer and renew their covenant of love and obedience with him. After the sermon a penitential hymn is sung, and some three or four questions, embodying a confession of sin, entire trust in Christ for pardon and salvation, and a resolution to lead a new and holy life, are propounded by the pastor and answered affirmatively by the communicants. The whole congregation then kneel and join the pastor or any pious member of the church, named by the pastor for the purpose,) in a fervent confession of sin and prayer for mercy, and for grace to live in all respects as Christians, after which the congregation rises, and the minister proclaims the promise of God to forgive all truly penitent and believing souls; and at the same

administering the supper. This mode answered very well when first introduced, and is not open to any very serious objection even now, in small congregations. But Lutheranism has been rapidly progressing in this country; many of its churches have become very numerous, and where there were some hundred or hundred and fifty communicants ten or twenty years ago, there are now four or five and even six hundred. And the consequence is, that an immense amount of time is unnecessarily consumed on account of the tedious mode of administering the supper, and great confusion is produced and idle curiosity excited by the continual passing to and from the altar through aisles obstructed by benches and crowded with people. In addition to these inconveniencies, the services are prolonged to a most immoderate extent, fatiguing and jading the mind both of minister and audience, and wearing out the strength of the former, so that it has come to such a pass that many ministers really have cause even to dread the approach of that inter-

time warns all against self-deception and hypocrisy, distinctly and emphatically repeating the declaration that God will not pardon hypocrites and unbelievers, but will certainly call them to an account and punish them forever notwithstanding their external confession.

esting and delightful season, which should be hailed by all with gratitude and holy joy. I have known public worship on communion occasions to commence at 9 o'clock in the morning and last till 2, or 3, or 4 in the afternoon. During the last two or three hours it was impossible to preserve solemnity and order, and the continued interruption by those whom want of health or patience induced to leave, was painfully trying. And when all was over, the minister was broken down and obliged to take his bed, and the people were worn out and unfit for further devotions on that day. This, in my opinion, constitutes an opaque spot in the otherwise bright escutcheon of Lutheranism; it is manifestly an evil, seen and felt in all large churches; an evil which is augmenting as those churches increase in membership and which calls loudly for a remedy. It would be easy to propose an improvement whereby the eucharist might be administered to five hundred communicants by a single pastor in one-fifth of the time that is required by the present mode; and by which the confusion and interruption, the prostration of physical strength and of patience would be avoided, and a far greater degree of solemnity and attention secured. But

to suggest a remedy now, would be aside from the object I have in view. I will only remark at present, that such a remedy must ultimately be applied. It may be opposed for a season, as an *innovation* or *new measure*. But stern necessity will eventually demand it, in tones that cannot be resisted; and hence I venture to predict, that in less than ten years the very evil now and heretofore complained of, will be obviated by the substitution of a plan or mode better suited to the exigency. Then the liturgical system of the Lutheran church will be without a blur; then it may challenge the most rigid scrutiny, and compare with that of any sister denomination without any apprehension of discredit; and then my arguments for being a Lutheran and my reasons for preferring evangelic Lutheranism to all and every other form of christianity, will be stronger and more impregnable than ever.

## CHAPTER V.

MY SIXTH REASON FOR BEING A LUTHERAN I FIND IN

VI. *The distinctive traits of Lutheranism.*

As there are numerous features of resemblance between the Lutherans and all orthodox sister denominations, so there are some points of discrepancy; and though the latter may not be fundamental, yet they are of sufficient importance to influence the judgment and secure my serious and decided preference in favor of the church of my choice. The features of resemblance have already been sufficiently brought out before the reader; those in which a diversity exists, and on account of which diversity I consider the Lutheran church entitled to a precedence, shall now be noticed. I am aware that I am about to enter on dangerous ground, and shall probably subject myself to the charge of sectarianism and bigotry; but it is my design not to lose sight of the most enlarged charity, and to speak of others with all the delicacy and respectfulness that the utmost catholicity of spirit can claim.

predestination founded upon the moral character of the respective persons concerned, which by virtue of the divine prescience was foreknown from all eternity; and even this predestination of character was on the *condition* of final perseverance in that character.

I am aware that this presentation of the very intricate and mysterious doctrine in question, is liable to objection, but not more so than any other which takes a contrary view of it. The most profound and ingenious exhibit of the Calvinistic scheme that I have ever met with is, to say the least, quite as open to exceptions, and indeed vastly more so. And when flaws and unanswerable difficulties are again and again pointed out, we are met at every turn with such arguments as the following: "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight;"—just as if these precious portions of inspired truth had been written for the exclusive benefit of our Calvinistic brethren, and for the express purpose of warding off all and every aggression upon their favorite system, and forever silencing the voice of argument.

But my object is not to discuss the vexed

question of predestination, but simply to state the Lutheran view as the ground of my preference. Lutherans accordingly reject the doctrine of absolute unconditional election to eternal life; they hold that Christ made a full and complete atonement for the sins of the whole world, and as that atonement satisfied the demands of divine justice, it follows, in my judgment, that it would be sufficient for the recovery of the whole fallen race of man if their offences had been ten thousand times more numerous and aggravated than they are. They teach that as Christ gave himself a ransom for all and tasted death for every man, so it is God's will that all and every man may be saved, and that nothing can prevent it but the sinner's own obstinate resistance of divine grace and his persevering unbelief. So that all the praise of universally designed redemption redounds to the glory of God's unbounded mercy, while all the blame and shame of condemnation fall upon the head of the finally impenitent. Thus the liberty of man is effectually secured, and the free, rich, impartial, unmerited benevolence of God is trumphantly vindicated. Thus Christ is exalted as the author of salvation, and his blood extolled as

efficacious for the moral cleansing of an entire world; while the sinner is humbled as the instrument of his own destruction, and rendered inexcusable for setting at naught that which alone could avail for his salvation. This view appears to me to be plainly set forth in the pages of inspired truth; it falls in not less happily with a correct analysis of the human mind, and is sanctioned by the personal experience of both saint and sinner. I indeed very cheerfully grant, that the Calvinistic scheme, first proposed and advocated by Augustine of Numidia in Africa,* in the fourth century, and afterwards by Gotteschalk,† of Saxon origin, in the ninth century, may be concatenated into a very plausible and apparently harmonious system, and has been and is yet preferred and earnestly defended by very many very learned and pious divines; and I mean no disrespect to

*Augustine had been an exceedingly wild and dissipated young man, nay even infamous, but became an eminently learned and pious divine. He was converted when about thirty years of age. Besides his errors on the subject of the decrees, he taught that "baptism brings with it the forgiveness of sins; that it is so essential, that the omission of it, will expose us to condemnation; and that it is attended with regeneration."

†Gotteschalk's views were condemned by several ecclesiastical councils held in the ninth century.

them and lay claim to no superiority of intellect, when I exercise the liberty to dissent, and give the Lutheran system a decided preference. I in fact take pleasure in bearing humble testimony to the truth of every fundamental doctrine, so far as my knowledge extends, taught in the great body of the Calvinistic churches in our country; but on the question of limited atonement and absolute decrees, I must be permitted frankly to assert my preference of the more liberal and enlarged, more scriptural and rational view maintained by Lutherans. While I see much in the rigid orthodoxy, the enlightenment and zeal, the benevolence and catholicity of Presbyterians to command my profound regard and admiration; still I could not for the cause assigned, so comfortably be a member of their communion as of that of the Lutheran church.

It is however sometimes contended that Luther himself was a Calvinist. How he could be so is rather difficult to conceive, if it be borne in mind that his system of doctrine was prepared and published years before Calvin's Institutes were even heard of. I grant that he was originally an Augustinian monk, and had embraced the Augustinian theory of predesti-

nation; I also admit that he even defended it most zealously against Erasmus, and that his early adherents, including even Melancthon, had at first done the same. But it is no less certain that Luther afterwards abandoned that theory as unscriptural and untenable. So early as the period when the Augsburg Confession was delivered, we hear him and Melancthon using the following language: "We reject the opinion of those who teach, that such as have once become *pious*, cannot *fall* from grace."—See Article xii. of Augsburg Confession, German copy. The phraseology of the Latin copy is not quite so strong, though the sense of both readings is substantially the same. Both clearly refer to the doctrine of *final* perseverance; because all parties admitted the possibility of a believer's temporary relapse. If the reader wants additional evidence of Luther's abandonment of the Augustinian theory, I refer him to a masterly sermon by the Reformer on Matt. xx. 16, "For many be called but few chosen." See Hauspost. domin. sept. fol. m. 62, 63, ed. Francof. ad. vidar. 1548;—also to Schlosseri Lutherus Lutheranus, in which the author, by copious citations from Luther's works, demonstrates incontestably the opposition of the great

Reformer to unconditional election and reprobation; and above all, to "History of Rise, Changes, and Formation of our Protestant systems of Doctrines, &c." by the very learned, and correct, and impartial Plank of Göttingen, in which he remarks: "It is indeed true, they (the Lutherans) could prove that the doctrine (predestination) was not long retained, and *that Luther himself had abandoned it!*"*

But again, Lutherans differ also from Baptists, as to the *subjects* and *mode of Baptism.* They maintain that *infants* should be baptized, and that *affusion* is more scriptural and rational than immersion.

(2.) They believe that God instituted infant-membership in his church at its first visible organization, and that no one can revoke that institution but himself, which he has never

*For a more extended extract from this work of the celebrated Plank, see that most valuable of all the writings of the Rev. Dr. S. S. Schmucker, entitled "Popular Theology," ed. 1842, p. 262—265. Remarking on the merits of the work in question, by Dr. Plank, Dr. S. says: "The entire impartiality and great ability of this work, which cost the author twenty years of labor and investigation, are conceded by all parties." And after giving the result of Dr. P's researches, proving the early abandonment by Luther of the doctrine of predestination, Dr. S. adds: "This is a correct and impartial statement of the facts in the case, which never have been, and never can be successfully controverted."

done. That the command of our Lord to his original followers to make all nations his disciples, baptizing them, &c., necessarily included children, and was so understood by them, since they had no idea of a church of God from which children were excluded. That the covenant of grace made with Abraham, also included his children, and required the sign and seal of that covenant (circumcision) in reference to the latter as well as the former, and that the promise of that covenant, renewed in the gospel, is *to us and our children*, Acts ii. 39. That the apostles baptized *whole households*, and by a careful calculation those households must have included children.* That the children of believing parents were called "*holy*," 1 Cor. vii. 14, and also "*faithfuls*," Titus i. 6, which terms being only used to designate church-members, could not have been applicable to children if they had not been dedicated to God in baptism.† That infant baptism was practised by the apostles, and that if not introduced by them, no period can be

* See this subject fully examined and the above assertion conclusively proven in "Kurtz on Baptism," p. 86—96.

† See Kurtz on Baptism, p. 126—130.

pointed out when it was introduced. That for the first eleven or twelve hundred years after Christ the lawfulness of infant baptism was not even called in question either by individuals or churches,* and when rejected for the first time in the twelfth century by a sect called the Petrobrussians,† that sect was opposed by the other churches and was soon dissolved and scattered; and that it was not until the sixteenth century that the novel procedure of rejecting infant baptism obtained any foothold;‡ and even now it is confined to a comparatively small portion of the church, while the great body of christians throughout the world, (in the proportion of perhaps four or five hundred to one,) still adhere to and practise it. Believing all this, I could not comfortably be a mem-

*Tertullian, who lived about two hundred years after the birth of Christ, was the first man who ventured to speak against infant baptism, and even he only urged its delay, and expressly recommended it if the child was not likely to survive the period of infancy.

†The Petrobrussians were a sect founded in the twelfth century by a Frenchman, called Peter de Bruis, who held that infants could not be saved under any circumstances, and therefore ought not to be baptized.

‡The Anabaptists, a fanatical sect which arose in Germany in the year 1522, were the very first body of people in the whole christian world who rejected infant baptism on the grounds that are now urged by our Baptist brethren.

ber of any church which denies to children that which Christ and the apostles, and the primitive fathers, and the mass of Christendom, and Scripture, and the dictates of reason so clearly declare to be their inalienable birthright.

(3.) As to immersion, Lutherans do not essentially object to it. They teach that baptism requires the application of water to the subject, and not the subject to the water; nor does God's Word specify the quantity of water to be used or the mode of its application. The apostles may *possibly* have administered baptism by immersion, but it is exceedingly doubtful, and altogether beyond the possibility of proof; while it is susceptible of the most conclusive evidence that they baptized by affusion or sprinkling. The application of a small quantity of water to a part of the body is termed *baptizing*, and the washing of tables or couches, hands, &c., which was done, not by immersion but by sprinkling or pouring water on them, is also called baptism in the New Testament. The Jailor at Phillippi with his whole family was baptized after midnight and within the prison, which fact forbids the idea of immersion. And I have never been able to conceive how the three

thousand converts on the day of Pentecost, could all have been immersed by the apostles during the few hours of the day that remained after preaching and the other necessary preparatory services; but they might all and twice the number have been baptized by sprinkling during the specified time. The original word rendered *baptize* in English, furnishes no certain clue in relation to the mode, since its generic sense has reference to *purifying* in any way by water, rather than to immersing or sprinkling. The terms *baptize* and *baptism*, therefore, while they certainly imply the use of water do not limit us to any one mode in which it is to be applied; being frequently employed to designate pouring, it follows, so far as these terms can settle the question, that pouring is undoubtedly in accordance with the divine command. The *mode* however, by no means forms an essential constituent of the sacrament, precisely as it does not in regard to the Lord's Supper; and hence there should never have been any serious contention in the church on this question, much less a specific sect based wholly upon the mere mode of administering an outward ordinance. While I therefore readily admit the validity of baptism

by immersion, yet nevertheless, for the reasons just assigned, and on the score of convenience, decorum, universal practicability in high northern climates where all the streams are frozen, and in dry deserts where there are no running waters or bathing places, I hold that the mode by sprinkling is decidedly preferable, and certainly more consistent with the spirit of Christianity and the testimony of impartial history and enlightened reason.

This is also the view which the Lutheran church takes, and therefore I am a Lutheran. Against the Baptists as a people and church, I urge nothing: they have given us a most praiseworthy example by their zeal in the cause of missions and in many other respects, and they have my most fervent prayers in all their indefatigable efforts to promote the good cause of our common Redeemer. But the Lutheran view of baptism and its mode of administration, please me vastly better, and this is another reason *why I am a Lutheran.*

Finally, Lutherans differ from the Methodists on *Christian perfection* and *the testimony of the Holy Spirit.* I have heard these doctrines so variously set forth by Methodist preachers that I have been at a loss to appre-

hend distinctly what the precise views of my Methodist brethren are. As I have none of their standard works at hand by which I might inform myself, and would consider it unfair to hold the church at large responsible for the crude and hasty declarations of a few extravagant and injudicious men, I prefer remaining silent as to what they teach, and barely notice the Lutheran view.

(4.) The doctrine of sinless perfection, then, I would remark, is not found in the Lutheran creed; on the contrary, the Augsburg Confession (Art. XII.) expressly "condemns the doctrine of those who contend, that some persons attain so high a degree of perfection in this life, that they cannot sin." If the question were, whether believers could be *perfectly sincere* in their efforts to serve God; or whether, by the grace of God, they can repent, believe, lead a holy life, constantly progress in moral purity, and thus in fact perform all that is required of them in order to their salvation; then there would, I presume, be no difficulty. But if perfection consists in entire and constant obedience to all the requisitions of the divine law, without the omission of a single duty in thought, feeling, word or deed, and the commission of

any thing whatever that is at variance with that law; then it is certain that Lutherans do not believe in it.

The law of God indeed requires perfect obedience; but this is no proof that it is attainable in this life. It is rather an evidence of the perfect holiness of that God who gave us the law, (a law admitting of sin would be unworthy of God,) and obligates us constantly to aim at and strive for a higher degree of moral purity. Sinless perfection presupposes an individual who needs not to pray for pardon, which Christ requires every one to do in the "Lord's prayer;" an individual who no longer requires the daily application of Christ's blood, and might therefore be justified by his own works and consequently have whereof to boast, which Paul solemnly affirms to be inconsistent with the gospel scheme; an individual who has no longer any conflict with indwelling sin, and is holier than God's saints, "in whom he putteth no trust," and purer than the heavens themselves, "which are not clean before him;" an individual whose experience belies such passages as the following: "If we say that we have no sin *we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;*"—"For in many things we offend

altogether;"—"For there is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not," &c. Now, is there such an individual to be found on earth? If not, then is the Lutheran system which rejects sinless perfection, but teaches that the gospel holds it up to us and requires us continually to press forward toward it, more consistent, and hence *I prefer being a Lutheran.*

There are indeed some passages which at first sight seem to favor the error in question, but when correctly understood they do not. When it is said that the regenerate Christian "cannot live in sin because he is born of God," I apprehend the meaning is, (and an acquaintance with the heresy which the inspired penman was combating, proves this to be the true import,) that he cannot live in *habits* of sin.

(5.) In respect to the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the acceptance of the believer, I shall add but a few remarks. Lutherans believe, that as the influences of the Spirit are indispensable to render the gospel effectual to the conversion of the sinner, so that same Spirit bears witness to his work; that is, the Spirit of God bears witness to the spirit of the believer that he is a child of God and heir of

eternal life. But how or in what manner is this testimony borne? This is the question in debate; some speak of a direct evidence, apart from the Word of God and the personal experience of the believer, which amounts, in effect to an extraordinary or supernatural communication. In this Lutherans do not believe.

They reject the opinion that there is an extraordinary feeling of an indescribable kind, susceptible of no verification by any antecedent or consequent, which over and above all the ordinary fruits of the Spirit, such as are described in Gal. v. 22, renders the acceptance of the believer certain. On the other hand, they hold that all the strivings of the Holy Ghost in the present day are *mediate;* that it is through the Word, which is the inspired truth of the Spirit, that he performs his office; and hence the mode in which he bears witness to the spirit of the Christian of his acceptance, is by producing in him, and testifying to their existence those holy tempers and dispositions, those gracious feelings and affections, in a word, that newness of heart and devotedness to God, which the Scriptures declare to be characteristic of the child of God, and which furnish to the Christian the most conclusive

proof of the divine truth of the Christian religion as well as of his own personal conversion and favor with God. Thus, the believer has the evidence of his own consciousness, resulting from the operations of God's Spirit upon his spirit, through the instrumentality of the Word, that his sins are pardoned and God is reconciled to him in Christ. Men may be in error in regard to this testimony; and doubtless many have thus deceived themselves, mistaking their own enthusiastic feelings and vivid fancies for the witness of the Spirit. But still there is such a thing as the testimony of God's Spirit to the believer's acceptance, and it is the prerogative of every believer to obtain this great and comfortable blessing, and it ought to be aimed at by every one. Whoever is without it, is living beneath his privilege and unworthy of his high calling.

We shall probably confer a favor on the reader by laying before him, in a few words, the two leading opinions of the theological world on this much disputed point. President Edwards, discussing it, says in his work on the Affections: "Hence it appears that the witness of the Spirit, of which the apostle speaks, is not any *immediate suggestion or revelation;*

but a gracious and holy work of the Spirit of God in the hearts of the saints, producing the dispositions and temper of children. It is a humble, child-like affection in God, casting out fear, or the servile spirit of bondage." "Great mischief has arisen from *the false delusive notion*, that the witness of the Spirit is a kind of inward suggestion, or declaration from God, assuring us that we are beloved, pardoned, &c.; and many souls, I fear, have been eternally ruined by this delusion." Wesley thus expresses himself, in his sermon on this subject: "The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God *directly* witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God, that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me; and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God." It is obvious that Wesley regarded this witness as something *immediate* and *direct*, not the result of self-examination or argumentation, and which he considered as antecedent to the testimony of our own spirit or of our consciousness. He accordingly adds: "Since therefore the testimony of this Spirit *must precede* the love of God and all holiness, of consequence it must precede our conscious-

ness thereof." But when required to explain the manner of this testimony, he freely acknowledged his inability. I need scarcely remark, that the view of President Edwards is that which best accords with the prevailing sentiment in the Lutheran church. Indeed, I know no Lutherans who with Wesley hold to a *direct* and *immediate* testimony, apart from the Word of God. Lutherans indeed believe with that good and great man, that it is the Spirit that worketh in us every manner of thing that is good, and also shineth upon his *own work*, and clearly shows what he has wrought. But as to a testimony that is *direct*, apart from the Word of God, independent of means, and accordingly extraordinary or miraculous, and moreover, antecedent to the fruits of the Spirit, which are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness," &c.; they one and all reject it. This also is the view which harmonizes with my own notions, and hence *I prefer being a Lutheran.*

In conclusion I would add, that though Lutherans believe that God sheds abroad his love in the heart of believers, and bestows upon them the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father, and also the witness and sealing

of the Spirit; yet great and glorious as these operations are; and satisfactory as they may be as to our acceptance when really possessed; yet apart from the concurring evidence of gracious affections and holy living, in other words, of good works, their supposed enjoyment is worth nothing. The feelings may be so closely imitated by Satan that it shall be impossible to distinguish; a person of warm imagination and confident mind may easily be wrought upon by that subtle spirit so that he shall appear to himself to be an eminent christian, and yet be under delusion. But holy tempers and affections, and holy living cannot be counterfeited, and hence after all, the most conclusive evidence of conversion, which is at the same time the least likely to subject us to mistake or deception, is that to which our Lord directs us: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

## CHAPTER VI.

MY SIXTH REASON FOR BEING A LUTHERAN I FIND IN,—

VI. *The distinctive traits of Lutheranism.*

In the preceding chapter I referred to five points of doctrine in which Lutherans differ from one or the other of our sister churches, viz. *election*, the *subjects* and *mode* of baptism, *perfection*, and the *testimony of the Spirit*. But the distinctive traits of Lutheranism are not confined to *doctrine;* they also extend to her

2. *Government.*

I have already alluded to this subject, but am necessarily obliged to recur to it, hoping however, to avoid tautology.

1. Lutherans differ from Episcopalians in relation to the ministry. The latter teach that Christ instituted three distinct orders of gospel ministers, viz. bishops, presbyters, and deacons; that *bishops* alone have the right to ordain and confirm; *presbyters* to preach the gospel and administer the sacraments; and *deacons* to preach and baptize only.

Yet nevertheless, Lutherans hold, that as ordinary *ministers of Christ* the apostles had successors. They had not only been called to their office in a peculiar manner, and endued with extraordinary gifts and graces for extraordinary purposes, but were also appointed as common ministers of the gospel, and as such, commanded to go forth and administer the word and sacraments.

Their office was accordingly *two-fold*, viz. *apostolic*, in a peculiar or technical sense, and *ministerial*, in a common sense. That such is the fact, appears too plainly from an examination of their character and course of proce-

was personal and temporary; and therefore, according to its nature and design, not successive, nor communicable to others, in perpetual descendance from them. It was as such in all respects extraordinary, conferred in a special manner, designed for special purposes, discharged by special privileges, as was needful for the propagation of Christianity, and founding of churches! To that office it was requisite that the person should have an immediate designation and commission from God; that he should be endowed with miraculous gifts and graces; that he should be able, according to his discretion, to impart spiritual gifts; and that he should govern in an absolute manner, as being guided by infallible assistance to which he might appeal. Now such an office, consisting of so many extraordinary privileges, and miraculous powers, which were requisite for the foundation of the church, was not designed to continue by derivation, for it contained in it divers things, which apparently were not communicated, and which no man, without gross imposture and hypocrisy, could challenge to himself."

dure, to require further argument. Now, in their extraordinary character, as apostles specially and personally called by the Master, divinely inspired, miraculously endued, infallibly guided, supernaturally qualified, and particularly designed for a special purpose, it was both impossible and unnecessary that they should have successors. Hence, there is not a single word to be found in all God's Scriptures, intimating that they had or were intended to have successors in this sense. But as *ordinary ministers*, they evidently had successors, and their successors were all those, who like them were empowered to preach the gospel and dispense the sacraments. Their commission, as ordinary ministers, is recorded Matt. xxviii. 19—20; and it was evidently in allusion to the ministerial succession, that our Lord added: "Lo I am with you always, *even unto the end of the world;*"—if the allusion here, was not to the succession in question, what propriety would there have been in the phrase: "unto the end of the world?"

If our Episcopal brethren had based their divisions of the ministry into three grades, upon grounds of expediency, Lutherans, according to their liberal views, could not seri-

ously object to it since they believe that our Lord, instead of prescribing an *entire, specific system* of ecclesiastical government, simply established a few fundamental principles, and left the church to fill up the outline as might seem best adapted to accomplish all the great purposes of his glorious system. But the case is widely different. It is maintained that these three orders were established by Christ and the apostles, and were intended to be preserved permanently in the church; that said orders have been handed down from the apostolic age in unbroken succession to the present period; and that no ordination but that administered by regular diocesan bishops is valid. Hence follows unavoidably, that proud and sweeping proscription, that bigoted and utterly groundless doctrine of prelacy, which unchurches all denominations in which presbyterial ordination prevails; strips all their pastors of their ministerial character; and declares all their official acts to be nugatory and vain!!! This is the unscriptural and odious issue to which the high-churchism of our Episcopal brethren, and the usurpations of Romanism necessarily lead; and hence Lutherans are opposed to such arrogant assumptions, and consider them-

selves bound on all proper occasions to resist them. It is accordingly obvious that I could not comfortably be a member of the Episcopal or Romish communion, or of any denomination which acknowledges diocesan prelacy or any distinct and superior order of clergy; and on this ground I am a very decided Lutheran, approving with all my heart of the stand which the Lutheran church has taken on this subject.

But as Lutherans hold to the doctrine of *ministerial parity*, it may not be out of place, to state some of the more prominent considerations upon which they believe themselves authorized to rest this doctrine:

1. *First* then I remark, that the title of "Bishop" is never employed in the New Testament, not even in a single instance, to designate an officer above the rank of an ordinary presbyter or a regular pastor. Our Episcopal brethren themselves admit this. But if the New Testament uniformly restricts the application of the word bishop, to pastors of equal rank, is it no evidence of ministerial parity?

2. Again, the sacred Scriptures do not furnish the slightest intimation of a difference of rank among the permanent gospel ministry.

True, we read of *apostles* and *evangelists*, but these were *extraordinary* officers. They were endowed with pre-eminent gifts and intended to be employed only *temporarily* in founding the church. This accomplished, their office ceased so far as it was extraordinary and temporary. If it be maintained that their pre-eminence and superior powers were communicable, and have been transferred to regular successors, down to the present period, let it be proved. Let those professed successors produce their credentials under the broad seal of miracles; but if they cannot, their pretensions are unfounded and must pass for nothing; and it must be admitted that Christ's ministers are all of equal rank.

3. Further, the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* are used in the sacred writings as *convertible*, that is, they are used indiscriminately to signify the same officers, and those officers confessedly not prelates but ordinary pastors. This is as evident as "the sun shining in his strength." As proof of it I refer the reader to Acts, xx. 17, from which passage we learn, that "from Miletus, he (Paul) sent to Ephesus, and called the *Elders* (that is, the presbyters or ordinary pastors) of the church;" and in the following 28th

verse those same elders are called *overseers*, that is, *bishops*. In other passages the word here rendered *overseers* is translated *bishop*, and ought to have been so rendered in the case under consideration, as is the fact in the German version by Luther. For the propriety of this criticism, see Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 26; Tit. i. 7; 1 Pet. ii. 25. Again, Paul iustructed Timothy in the qualities which were to be required in those who desired the office of a *bishop*; 1 Tim. iii. 1. Paul and Barnabas ordained *presbyters* in every church which they had founded; Acts, xiv. 23. Titus is directed to ordain in every city, *presbyters*, who were to be "blameless, the husband of one wife." The reason of so strict a scrutiny into character is thus rendered: "for a *bishop* must be blameless;" Titus, i. 5. Now, let any intelligent mind not warped by previous opinion, compare the application of these terms and it will irresistibly appear that the *bishop* and the *presbyter* are one and the same person. But if the terms *bishop* and *presbyter* or *elder*, are employed interchangeably to signify the same officer, what becomes of the argument for prelatic dignity?

4. In the fourth place I remark, that we do

not find in the Bible a division of ministerial functions among different orders of ministers. The duties of Christ's ministers are prescribed with great distinctness and precision in the New Testament writings; if there had been three different grades of clergy, viz; bishops, priests or presbyters, and deacons, in the apostolic church, might we not reasonably expect their respective duties to be specifically enumerated and distributed among the several classes of clergy, according to the rank they hold? But where do we find such a division of duties? Where do we read that diocesan bishops have the exclusive authority to confirm and ordain; that presbyters may not ordain, but only preach the gospel and administer the sacraments; and that deacons shall only preach and baptize? But if such a division of duties cannot be found, I ask whether the equal rank of Christian ministers may not be fairly inferred?

5. Fifthly, in Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus on the subject of appointing ministers, he never speaks of more than one order. These instructions will be found in 1 Tim. iii. 1—7; 2 Tim. ii. 2; Titus i. 5. Now let any man who has no turn to serve; no in-

terest in misconstruing the obvious meaning of words, carefully read these instructions, and we may safely challenge him to point to the syllable that even hints at different grades of clergy. But can we suppose if it had been the design of the Master or of the apostle, that more than one order should be constituted, that Paul, in imparting instructions on that very subject, would have remained silent on so important a point?—that he would not so much as allude to more than one order, nor give a single direction as to the necessary qualifications and mode of inducting the supposed orders into office? Who is prepared to charge Paul with such remissness, with such an unpardonable dereliction of duty? And yet, we *must* thus charge him, or admit the doctrine of ministerial parity.

6. In the last place, the commission of our Lord to the first heralds of the cross, contemplates them all as perfectly *equal*. The commission reads thus: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"—"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the

end of the world." Not a word of discrimination do we here find between the apostles; not a syllable intimating three orders of ministers; they are all addressed as one class of teachers, reminding us of the endearing fact that, "One is our Master, but that we all are brethren." If some of the apostles or even of their successors, had been designed to act as prelates, others as presbyters, &c., would Christ have intimated nothing to that effect, in giving them their final charge? would he not, perhaps have said something like the following to one rank: Go and *ordain* and *confirm*, &c.; to another: Go and preach and administer the sacraments, &c., and to a third: Go and preach and baptize, &c.? Or if it were extravagant to expect so much explicitness, would he not, in some mode or other, at least have alluded to a distinction of rank as well as of function? But in the absence of all this, is it unfair to infer the equality of the Christian ministry?

I might extend this list of arguments in favor of parity, but the foregoing appears to be sufficient. I have omitted to refer to the testimony of the "Fathers;" because *our religion is the religion of the Bible.* The word of God

is the only infallible as well as the sufficient rule of faith and practice. "Even if," says Dr. Miller, "prelacy were found unequivocally represented as existing, by the Fathers, in fifty years after the last apostle, yet if it be not found in the Bible as it assuredly is not, such testimony would by no means establish its apostolic appointment. It would only prove that the church was very early corrupted. We know, indeed, that no such testimony exists; but if it did, as long as we have the Bible, we ought to reject it."

* * * * * *

"But it cannot be too often repeated, or too constantly kept in view, that whatever the Fathers may say on this subject, is not to decide respecting it. If episcopacy, when brought to the test of Scripture, cannot stand, we may very willingly leave its support from other sources to those who may feel inclined to receive for doctrines the commandments of men."

* * * * * *

"In conformity with the foregoing statements, it is well known that, at the era of the Reformation, the leaders of the church of England *stood alone*, in reforming their church upon prelatical principles. Luther, Melanc-

thon, Zwingli, Bucer and Peter Martyr, as well as Calvin and Knox, all—scattered throughout every part of Europe, without concert, interpreted the New Testament as plainly teaching the doctrine of ministerial parity, and regarded every kind of imparity in the gospel ministry as the result of human contrivance, and not of divine appointment. In short, in every part of Protestant Christendom, out of England,—however the leaders of the Reformation differed, and differed sometimes with ardor, on other subjects, here they, with scarcely a single exception, were all agreed, that, in the apostles' days, bishop and presbyter were the same, in fact as well as in name; and that, even when it was thought proper to allow to any ministers a degree of pre-eminence, it was to be defended on the ground of human prudence alone. How shall we account for this fact, but by supposing that the plain and obvious construction of the Word of God on this subject, is favorable to parity, and unfriendly to prelatical claims?"

From the foregoing my readers can be at no loss to perceive why I am a member of the Lutheran in preference to the Episcopal church, the Romish apostacy, and the Greek communion.

## CHAPTER VII.

I HAVE ALREADY, IN THE LAST TWO CHAPTERS, ASSIGNED AS MY SIXTH REASON FOR BEING A LUTHERAN,

VI. *The distinctive traits of Lutheranism.*

These distinctive traits so far as they refer to

(1.) *Doctrine*, have been sufficiently noticed. On the subject of

(2.) *Government*, I have also commented, pointing out the difference between Lutherans and Episcopalians in respect to the *parity* of Gospel ministers. I continue my observations on the distinctive traits of Lutheranism in regard to *government*, by remarking secondly,

2. That Lutherans differ from the Methodist Episcopal church in relation to *the ministry*. In the latter church there are several distinct orders. Some are itinerants or travelling preachers, others local preachers, others presiding elders, and others bishops. All these alike have authority to preach and dispense the sacraments, while at the same time each class enjoys privileges peculiar to itself. In briefly referring to these several orders of ministers, I

by no means design making invidious distinctions; my purpose is simply to show wherein Lutherans differ from others in ecclesiastical government.

The *Bishops* in the Methodist Episcopal church are elected for life by the travelling ministers, and hold the power of stationing all the preachers. Thus, the itinerant destiny of not much less than *three thousand* Methodist ministers in the United States is placed in the hands of the bishops; while the people to whom all these ministers are to dispense the gospel and who are required to raise an adequate support for them, have not one word to say on the subject of their appointment or the amount of their salary! There is no appeal from the decisions of the bishops in this most interesting and important matter, and hence the preachers must either obey or leave the itinerant ranks. Of course this arrangement subjects the preachers and people to a state of dependance on episcopal power, and enables that power to acquire an immense amount of influence over both ministers and churches,—an influence that cannot but prove dangerous and highly prejudicial to the interests of religion in the hands of any other but a truly enlightened

and pious man; which fortunately, so far as my knowledge extends, has been the character of all Methodist bishops in this country.

The next order of ministers in the Methodist Episcopal church are called *Presiding Elders.* They are appointed by the bishops and are placed over the travelling and local preachers, exhorters, &c. in their respective circuits. They accordingly appear to be the agents of the bishop, exercising the bishop's powers to a certain extent in his absence. If this view be correct, a presiding elder denotes one *qui vicem gerit,* who acts in the place of another, or is second in authority. It is worthy of remark, that the office of presiding elder and also the title of bishop in its technical application, are American appendages to the Methodist system; as in England where Methodism was first established, they had neither the one nor the other.

*Local preachers* have very little power, and *itinerants* a great deal; but as I necessarily have to recur to this subject on a future occasion, I will drop it for the present.

After the above statements, and what has been said in a previous chapter on ministerial parity, as it exists in the Lutheran church, I

need not consume time in showing wherein Lutherans differ from Methodists on this subject. There is emphatically but *one order of ministers* among Lutherans, and they are all presbyters, pastors or bishops of their respective charges. They are not stationed by the synods, but chosen by the people, dismissed by the people, the amount of their salary decided by the people, and at liberty to resign their charge whenever their voluntary engagements to the people have been fulfilled. Whether this radically republican system accords with the Bible and best secures the rights of the people and the prosperity of religion, I submit to the reader. I am free to confess, that in my judgment, it harmonizes with the fundamental principles of the gospel and the example of the primitive Christians, and hence I decidedly prefer being a Lutheran.

We indeed read of bishops in the New Testament; but they were not of superior rank; they were the ordinary ministers of the gospel, and the term bishop was an appellative applying alike to all the permanent officers who were authorized to preach the gospel; so that the appropriating of the title to a special class of ministers, and the investing of that class with

special prerogatives, is clearly a *human* device. This fact has already been amply proven, and need not again be discussed. I will only add a quotation from Mosheim, which appears to me to be just in point. "A *bishop*," says this distinguished historian, "in the first ages of the Christian church, was a person who had the care of *one Christian assembly*, which at that time was, generally speaking, small enough to be contained in a private house."* Again, "the rulers of the church were called either presbyters or bishops, *which two titles were undoubtedly applied to the same person.*"†

As to *presiding elders*, I know of no specific direction in the New Testament, or specific example in the primitive church, expressly demanding such an order of ministers. As however, our Methodist brethren, if my information be correct, do not claim to have any such authority either in regard to episcopacy or presiding eldership, but have introduced the system wholly upon prudential grounds, and in accordance with the general principles pre-

*Vide Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. ed. by the Meth. E. Book Concern, vol. i. p. 91.

†Ibid. p. 88.

scribed in the New Testament in relation to church polity, I would not seriously object to it. In view of the haughty pretensions of *jure divino* episcopacy, as maintained by the Papists and in the Protestant Episcopal church, it is to be regretted, that the more appropriate and less offensive term of *superintendents*, introduced by Wesley, should have been abolished in this country to make room for that which in its application to a superior order of ministers, cannot but be misapprehended, and thus contribute to strengthen prejudice and perpetuate error, whilst in the mean time it may foster pride in a heart not wholly sanctified. Wesley himself seems to have entertained this opinion. When he learned that Mr. Asbury and Dr. Coke had established a species of episcopacy in the United States, he addressed a very pointed and impressive letter to them, dated: "London, Sept. 20, 1778," and containing the following withering rebuke: * * * "But in one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid you and the Doctor differ from me: I study to be little, you to be great; I creep, you strut along; I found a school, you a college; nay, and call it after your own names. Oh, beware! Do not seek to be something. Let

me be nothing, and Christ be all in one instance of this your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you suffer yourselves to be called a bishop? I shudder, I start, at the very thought; men may call me a knave, or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content. But they shall never, by my consent, call me a bishop. For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this.—JOHN WESLEY."*

(3.) Lutherans differ from the Methodist Episcopal church on the subject of *legislation*. Among the former every individual church legislates for itself. Special conferences, synods, and the General synod may propose and recommend rules and regulations for the government and discipline of the church; but the pastor and members adopt those rules and regulations only so far as they deem them scriptural and expedient; and if they decline acceding to them they are not therefore unchurched or proscribed, but still left to "pursue the even tenor of their way" unmolested, so long as they do not err from or violate long established fundamental principles.

In the Methodist Episcopal church the laws

* See Moore's Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 285.

of government are made by the General Conference. The General Conference is composed wholly of travelling preachers, without a single lay-representative, and presided over by the bishops, who are officers for life. The travelling preachers constituting the General Conference, are appointed by the Annual Conferences, which are also composed of travelling preachers to the exclusion of all lay-delegation. So that in fact, the entire government of the church is emphatically a government of *travelling preachers and bishops*. The laws enacted by the General Conference are binding alike on local preachers and private members, though neither is represented in the legislative department, and neither is possessed of a negative power on laws which may affect their property, persons and reputation.

I offer this expose of the mode of ecclesiastical legislation in a sister church, not, I trust, with unkind feelings, or with the most distant view to detract from the well-earned reputation of that church, for whose zeal in the cause of God I entertain the highest regard and for whose success I pray with all the fervor of my heart. My object is to exhibit the distinctive traits of the church of my choice, and to

assign the reasons why I prefer being a Lutheran.

The supreme legislator of the church of God, is its own Glorious Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. But as he designed his religion for all people and kindred, under every variety of civil institutions, he did not, and could not in the nature of things, prescribe one entire specific system, adapted alike to every nation, age, country and civil police. Hence he has wisely established only general fundamentals, and required the church to carry out those fundamentals by subordinate and co-operative legislation suited to the peculiar circumstances of the case. While he therefore governs as Supreme and Universal Law-giver, each denomination or individual church is authorized to legislate in non-essentials according to the general declared principles of the Head. Hence the diversity that is to be found in the several branches of his kingdom. And while I would refrain from all equivocal reflections on the form of government established in the Methodist Episcopal church; while I am not even disposed to dispute the position that their form is wisely adapted to the Methodist economy, and seems thus far for the most part to

work well in reference to that branch of Christ's kingdom; I must be permitted to assert my great and decided preference of the liberal and republican system adopted by Lutherans. The feature in the government of the Lutheran church which authorizes *lay-representation* in conferences, synods and general synod, is one dear to my heart;—a trait which commends itself strongly to my notions of equal and mutual rights; which accords well with the civil institutions of our country, and with the polity of the church of Christ in the purest periods of her history. The following extract from Mosheim,* will be found to corroborate these remarks, while it strengthens my confidence in the Lutheran view: "In those early times, every christian church consisted of the people, their leaders, and the ministers and deacons; and these, indeed, belong essentially to every religious society. The people were undoubtedly the first in authority, for the Apostles themselves showed by their examples, that nothing of moment was to be carried on, or determined, without the consent of the assembly;† and this method of proceeding was

*Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 87.

†Acts i. 15; vi. 3; xv. 4; xxi. 22.

both prudent and necessary, in these critical times." It was, therefore the assembly of the people which chose their own rulers and teachers, or received them by a free and authoritative consent, when recommended by others. The same people rejected or confirmed, by their suffrages, the laws that were proposed by their rulers to the assembly, excommunicated profligate or unworthy members of the church, restored the penitent to their forfeited privileges, passed judgment on the different subjects of controversy and dissension that arose in their community; examined and decided the disputes which happened between the elders and deacons; and, in a word, exercised all that authority which belongs to such as are invested with the sovereign power."

The truth is, as the rights of the laity are discussed and adjudicated in ecclesiastical bodies, I am at a loss to conceive of adequate grounds for excluding them from a voice and vote; and hence, if asked: *Why are you a Lutheran?* I point, amid a multitude of other reasons, to the *legislative department*, where all the parties concerned enjoy equal rights. The Rev. Dr. H. B. Bascom, a learned and distinguished Methodist minister, has expressed

and advocated the sentiments of Lutherans on this point so eloquently and impressively, that I cannot forbear quoting from him. He has justly said: "The right to be represented where law is made to govern, is not only essential to civil freedom, but is equally the basis of religious liberty. Civil and religious liberty are intimately connected; they usually live and die together, and he who is the friend of the one, cannot consistently be the enemy of the other. If liberty, as is admitted on all hands, is the perfection of civil society, by what right can religious society become despoiled of this crowning excellence of the social state? The New Testament furnishes the principles but not the forms of church government; and in the adaptation of forms to these principles, Christian bodies should be governed mainly by the few facts and precedents furnished in the apostolic writings. The will and mind of the Great Head of the church, on this subject, so far as clearly revealed, whether by express statute or fair implication, cannot be contravened without impiety, but in relation to a variety of topics, connected with the internal police, and external relations of the church, on which the Scriptures are silent, it is left to

every Christian community to adopt its own regulations, and the same is true of nations. Ministers and private Christians, according to the New Testament, are entitled to equal rights and privileges—an identity of interests implies an equality of rights. A monopoly of power, therefore, by the ministry is an usurpation of the rights of the people. No power on the part of the ministry, can deprive the people legitimately of their elective and representative rights; as the ministry cannot think and act for the people, in matters of principle and conviction, so neither can they legislate for them, except as their authorized representatives."—(See Declaration of Rights, art. 9.)

(4.) Lutherans differ from the Methodists in the mode of *holding church property*. In the Methodist Episcopal church, the travelling preachers possess the right of controlling the property. Accordingly, the preachers, who are the agents of the bishop, may dispossess the society or congregation of the house of worship, parsonage, &c. By this system, the amount of church property held by the preachers, is said to be little short of Four Millions. Add to this the Chartered Fund in Philadelphia, of *thirty thousand dollars*, the Book Es-

tablishment in New York, estimated at *two or three hundred thousand dollars;* and the funds of the Preachers' Aid Society in Baltimore, and the aggregate will probably amount to considerably above *Four Millions!* all which, if I am correctly informed, is managed and controlled by the travelling preachers, agreeably to the regulations prescribed, and to the entire exclusion of the laity or members of the church, who were chiefly instrumental in contributing this immense sum.

In the Lutheran church it is entirely different. All the church property is held by the congregations, to whom of right it belongs. The members of each church elect officers, called the council, and these officers hold the property in trust for the church; except when it is incorporated, in which case the property is held by the corporation, in the name of and for the use of the church. Neither trustees nor corporations can purchase, or sell or dispose of church property in any way without authority from two-thirds of the voting members, who are usually those only who are in full communion with the church. This mode of holding and managing the temporal possessions, of the church, pleases me vastly better

than that previously referred to. It secures the rights of the people, while it leaves ministers to prosecute their own peculiar work, free and unperplexed by financial concerns. Besides this, it seems better to accord with the apostolic usage, as may be seen by reference to Acts, vi. 2–5: "Then the twelve called the MULTITUDE of the DISCIPLES unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables, wherefore brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over THIS BUSINESS, but we will give ourselves *continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word;* and the saying pleased the whole MULTITUDE."

After the above exhibit of some of the characteristics of Lutheranism, I may be permitted to ask the unbiased reader, whether he can recognize in it, no justification of my ecclesiastical partiality? I mean no disrespect to our Methodist brethren; they are among the last on earth whom I could be tempted to traduce; because, whatever defects may seem to be interwoven in their system, I behold much in that same system to admire; much in their unremitting zeal, and their unwearied efforts to

preach the gospel to the poor and destitute, and to spread it in distant climes, that challenges my profound regard and commands my unfeigned reverence. Though the division of the ministry into different ranks; the exclusion of the laity from all exercise of legislative power; and the holding of such an immense amount of property and funds by the preachers, are repugnant to my notions of primitive simplicity, and of equal rights and mutual justice; yet, in the opinion of our Methodist brethren, my views are erroneous. Moreover, the membership have voluntarily yielded up their natural rights, and consented that others shall exercise them in their stead. They have tried their system and think it good; and I know not that the great body of those who adhere to it, are discontented or anxious for a change. Why then, should I judge my brethren? I do not judge them; I bid them God speed, and pray for their continued prosperity. But while all this is conceded, I may without offence, I trust, frankly and unequivocally express my vast preference of the Lutheran system. Ministerial equality; legislative equality; congregational rights in relation to property and the disposal of ecclesiastical funds; are all important ad-

vantages which I highly prize. In no church are they more distinctly defined and more sternly maintained than in the Lutheran; and therefore I love Lutheranism, especially as organized in the United States. It is a scriptural, a noble, a liberal and equitable system. No man need be ashamed of it, or blush to own that he holds to it and reveres it. No one need turn his back upon it, and go in search of a better economy. No truly enlightened and pious person, who entertained correct apprehensions, ever did renounce it, or can cherish the hope of receiving in exchange for it, a system more wisely accommodated to his religious wants and his inalienable rights. Am I then again asked: *why are you a Lutheran?* Let the answer be sought, in the genius of Lutheranism.

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## SUPPLEMENT TO CHAPTER VII.

In my attempt to set forth some of the distinctive features of Lutheranism in the preceding chapter, I took the liberty to allude to Methodism. This I did in order to carry out my purpose in a more intelligible manner. My

object was not to disparage the Methodist Episcopal church, since I entertain a high regard and affection for that branch of Christ's kingdom, but to vindicate Lutherans. But with all my caution I have unfortunately given offence to some of my Methodist brethren, which is to me a subject of sincere regret. Exception has especially been taken to my statements respecting the *government* of the Methodist Episcopal church and their mode of *holding church property*. The very able editor of the Western (Cincinnati) Christian Advocate declares, that "many of those statements are calculated to make very wrong impressions that may do them (the Methodists) great injustice in the estimation of my readers;" and that "some of my representations are *palpably false*." He further adds: "If our friend (the editor of the Lutheran Observer) will examine the Discipline carefully, he will find that a man cannot be a preacher without the vote of his lay-brethren, and that laymen have much to do in the administration of the executive department of the government, or the enforcing of gospel discipline." In reference to what I said of the mode of *holding church property*, he remarks: "Now every one acquainted with

the economy of the Methodist Episcopal church knows that all such property is held by boards of trustees, principally, if not altogether, composed of lay-members; and by reference to our church deed of settlement it will be seen that all our churches are held by those trustees in trust for the use of the *members* of the Methodist Episcopal church; and so far from recognizing the preachers as the rightful owners of the property, the deed provides that the trustees shall permit the preachers to preach and expound God's Holy Word in those churches when they come properly authorized, and are in good standing. How absurd it would be to secure this privilege to the ministry, if the houses were their own! Indeed, we are surprised that the worthy editor of the Lutheran Observer ever suffered this misrepresentation to be made in his paper."

In reply I have to remark, that I have "examined the Discipline carefully" and with a sincere desire to understand it correctly, and the result is a conviction that not one of my statements is "palpably false," but that all are in strict conformity to the constructive import of that document and the "deed of settlement." The fact that "a man cannot be a preacher [in

the Methodist Episcopal church,] without the vote of his lay brethren" &c., and that all property is held by boards of trustees principally, if not altogether, composed of lay members;" do not essentially alter the case. Those "lay brethren" are appointed by the preachers, and therefore are their creatures. Moreover, though by their votes they should ever so earnestly recommend a man to the pastoral office, it is the *preachers alone without a single lay-vote*, who finally decide the question. So also in reference to their houses of worship and other property; though held by lay trustees, yet what are the limitations and conditions of that tenure? Why, by virtue of the deed of settlement, they hold the building "for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal church *in the United States of America*," &c. Accordingly, the deed does not secure the property to the purchasers and builders nor to the members who constitute the congregation, but to the church at large, or rather, virtually to the travelling preachers, including of course the bishops. If the purchasers or builders, or members who occupy the church, should at any time cease to be members of the Methodist community, they will no longer be entitled to

the use of the house of worship which they have built and paid for. Now, do these gentlemen hold any other property by such tenure? Do they retain the use of a house of residence that they have bought and paid for, only so long as they are the members of Methodism? How is it possible that they can be the *bona fide* owners of property, the tenure of which, depends upon their theological and ecclesiastical opinions? If these gentlemen were to become Presbyterians, Lutherans, or Baptists, they lose their property? If the Stockholders in the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road Company change their theological, ecclesiastical, political, scientific, or literary opinions, do they lose *their* property? No. And why? THEY OWN IT.

But this is not all. After a careful examination of the deed of settlement, and Discipline &c., I find that the *preachers* do not permit the people to commence building a house of worship without first securing by subscription three-fourths of the cost, and vesting the title of the lot agreeably to the deed of settlement; no charter is admitted unless in accordance with that which *they* have enjoined; *they* appoint the new boards of trustees and nominate persons to fill all vacancies; *they* reserve to

themselves the right to use the churches, at all times and forever, and the members—not those who built or occupy the house of worship and their legal successors, but the members of the denomination in general, are authorized to use it, and that only in conformity to the rules and discipline which the *preachers* may from time to time agree upon and adopt; *they* (the preachers) allow no congregation to mortgage or sell the property to pay its debts without giving a year's notice to the pastor; if the trustees are compelled to sell the property, the proceeds must be at the disposal *not of the congregation, but of the Annual Conference*, a body consisting exclusively of preachers; the trustees are bound to make their report not to the society whose money they manage, but to the Quarterly Conference, and no congregation can refuse to submit to the rules and discipline which the preachers may see fit to adopt, or secede from their connection, without forfeiting the privilege of using the place of worship. From all these considerations I have come to the unavoidable conclusion that the preachers of the Methodist Episcopal church are in effect the owners and controllers of the meeting houses, parsonages, &c. of the denomination. If nevertheless I

am still mistaken, it is verily a mistake of the head and not of the heart; it is to the obtuseness of my intellect that the error must be ascribed. And I find some apology for my dulness of apprehension in the reflection, that a numerous host of writers of the Methodist Episcopal church formerly, as well of other churches, far superior in acuteness of mind, have from the same premises arrived at the very same conclusion. So that it was, at least not over-polite, to say nothing of Christian courtesy for the editor of the Western Christian Advocate to attribute so unceremoniously, "*palpable falsehood*" to his brother editor; *indeed I am surprised that the worthy editor ever* permitted himself, on such equivocal grounds, to hurl this *unseemly accusation* against one for whom he professes to entertain regard.

held in trust by some ten or a dozen officers, chosen to act as the representatives of the whole church. This arrangement I believe to be more in unison with the Bible and the example of the primitive Christians, as well as with the republican institutions of our country. In this fact then I find another argument for preferring to be a Lutheran.

Lutherans also differ from their Methodist brethren in relation to *the trial of members*. Among the latter, members are brought to trial either before the society or a select number, as the preacher pleases, in the presence of a bishop, preacher, elder or deacon. The preacher may allow the accused time to prepare himself, or summon him to trial forthwith. Being clothed with authority to appoint the jury or committee of trial, he may also select men who are favorable or unfavorable to the accused, while the latter has not the right of challenge. The accused however, may appeal to the next Quarterly Conference; but he may also after having been acquitted in the lower court, be arraigned again on the same charge by the preacher, if he differ in judgment from that court. Official members who acted as committee men and voted in the first trial, may

again sit and vote on the same case in the Quarterly Conference. Moreover, the Quarterly Conference is composed of the travelling and local preachers, exhorters, stewards and leaders, so that a majority of the members of the Quarterly Conference are in fact dependent on the preacher-in-charge, as he appoints all the leaders, who generally make a majority. The preacher also nominates the stewards, licenses the exhorters, &c., so that the conference may be considered in the case of appeals, as the preacher's jury. How far the rights of the individual on trial are guarded by this system, and to what extent the entire power of expelling or retaining members is concentrated in the preacher, I willingly submit to the judgment of the reader. My object is not to arraign the church polity of our Methodist brethren, or to find fault with any part of their economy; but simply to state facts so far as I understand them, and to show, as the ground of my preference, wherein Lutherans differ.

When a member is to be brought to trial in the Lutheran church, he is cited to appear before the church-council, composed of a number of the most exemplary men, elected by a majority of the voting members of the church.

If not ready for trial, he may claim a reasonable time to prepare himself. He has the privilege of examining witnesses when on trial, and of defending himself by counter-testimony and self-vindication. If dissatisfied with the decision of the church-council, he may appeal to a special conference composed of all the ministers residing in the immediate neighborhood and an equal number of lay-delegates. Or he may pass by the special conference if he choose, and carry his case at once up to the synod constituted of all the ministers and their lay-delegates, living within a certain district, and embracing usually the members of some half a dozen special conferences, more or less. Or, if he be opposed to this course, the accused may petition the synod to appoint a special committee from among its own members, to meet in the congregation to which he belongs, and there review the whole matter, and either confirm the original decision of the church-officers, or request them to grant him a new trial, and recommend a reversal of the judgment.

Now, whatever others may think of this process, I am free to confess that it has my entire approbation. It involves no usurpation of power on the part of the church or the minis-

ter, the conference or the synod. Private character is duly appreciated; personal rights are abundantly protected; and the purity of the church is amply provided for. If by such a course of action, guilt cannot be fastened upon an individual, he ought to be regarded as innocent; and if by the same course moral obliquity is discovered to attach to him, he *deserves* and justly receives punishment. Am I once more asked: *why are you a Lutheran?* why do you cleave so warmly and closely to the Lutheran church? I answer, have I not reason?—have I not *many sound reasons?* Look at the mode of receiving members into the church; of exercising discipline, and of trying offending brethren, and then judge whether my predilections are not well founded.

Lutherans also differ from some other churches in the mode of electing ministers. Among Episcopalians the right of choosing a minister is vested in the church-officers; among the Methodists he is, as already stated, appointed by the bishop. In the latter case the people composing the congregation, have not a word to say in the matter; in the former case a few decide for the whole. The one partakes of aristocracy, and the other of monarchy.

But among Lutherans the minister is elected by the people. The church-council proposes the candidates, and the congregation elects, fixes the amount of salary and retains the minister just as long as they and the minister think proper. Thus, the rights of the people are preserved inviolate; and that too with a forecast and delicacy not to be surpassed; the minister is emphatically a *free man;* and all is in lovely harmony with the principles of our liberal and republican government. Thus it was in the primitive church, and thus in my opinion, it ever ought to be; and hence I am a Lutheran.

I have been a member of the Lutheran church more than thirty years; during which time I am sensible, of having been justly chargeable with much unfaithfulness and numerous inadvertencies. But my brethren have borne with my infirmities; treated me with Christian love; and admonished me in the spirit of fraternal kindness when my departures from the line of duty required it. For these and numerous other reasons, my heart clings with warm attachment and increasing fondness to the Evangelic Lutherans; to the instrumentality of whose faithful ministry, the watchfulness and encouragements of whose member-

ship, and the rich provisions of whose communion, I am so immensely indebted. I love them sincerely; and have never, never, felt the slightest inclination to leave them. How could I go away from a communion in which God sought, and found, and blessed my poor, wandering, lost soul, and nourished it with the bread of eternal life? If his grace could apprehend me, at a time when there was much less spirituality and zeal in the church than at present, how much more can that grace sustain and preserve me now that the spirit of revival and the power of godliness pervade nearly every portion of the church?—No, I may not, I dare not renounce the mother that begat me to newness of life,—her who yearned over me in spiritual birth, nourished me in childhood, bore with my waywardness in youth, and now in my increasing age more than supplies all my spiritual wants, and exercises a forbearance and kindness, and an affection and interest in my behalf, which I am deeply conscious of not deserving. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Multitudes, I doubt not, in the Methodist, Presbyterian, German Reformed, and other evangelical churches, have received the same "common salvation,"—enjoyed the same rich blessings in their several communities, of which I speak, and I therefore cherish for them an attachment similar to that which I bear toward the Lutheran body. I honor that feeling; and earnestly pray that the Lord may, among all denominations, multiply the number of those who know him as their Savior from sin. For my heart tells me, that what the world censoriously call "sectarianism," is perfectly consistent with catholic love. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

## CHAPTER IX.

I AM A LUTHERAN,—

VII. *Because I am perfectly satisfied with the means of edification and usefulness in the Lutheran church.*

I conceive, that when a man has been brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, in any religious community, he should not lightly withdraw himself from the people who have been the means of conferring upon him so great a benefit; inasmuch as he has, in his own experience, positive proof, that the presence and blessing of God are with them. On the subject of secession from a church in which we have held communion, I take the ground of Archbishop Whately. Such an act is "always either a duty or a sin." It is a duty when we are required to believe what we are convinced to be untrue, or to do what we believe to be sin, as a condition of membership; and it is a sin to do so for any lighter reason. In the course of thirty years I have had some opportunity for looking abroad, and observing the creeds, polity and practices of different bodies

of Christians; and I am free to declare my conscientious preference for those of the Evangelic Lutheran church.

1. One great means of spiritual improvement, is the public worship of Almighty God. His people are required to unite in confession, supplication, intercession and thanksgiving; and he has promised to be with them in their "holy convocations." One of the most pithy formularies for conducting public worship and performing ministerial services, is the liturgy of the Lutheran church, which is used with great advantage to ministers and people in a number of churches. Yet I should be sorry to be confined to this liturgy, excellent as it is; for it cannot in the nature of things, meet every case of human necessity. Nor ought either pastors or private Christians to be hampered in the enjoyment of the privilege of *extempore* prayer, which the Lord has conferred upon them for the edification of his church. In the exercise of this important grace, not a few of our laymen greatly excel, and are eminently useful. Accordingly, in the Lutheran church I find a liturgy which may be used or not, as ministers and churches deem proper, while the gift of free and *extempore* prayer may be exercised

by all without any one to hinder. Is not this just as it ought to be?

2. Perhaps no denomination are more highly favored than the Lutheran, with respect to that delightful part of divine worship,—the singing of the praises of God. Their collection of German psalms and hymns and spiritual songs is probably the most copious and varied, and at the same time the most deeply imbued with devotional feeling and living faith of any in the world. And that in the English language is also one of surpassing excellence. It presents a distinct and full account of evangelic christianity; an exhibition of the heights and depths of religion, speculative and practical; strong cautions against the most plausible errors; and the clearest directions for making our calling and election sure, and for perfecting holiness in the fear of God. The poetry is chaste, dignified, fervent and sublime; but what is of infinitely more moment, is its spirit of piety and Christian experience; and this breathes and lives throughout the whole collection. It is in this view especially that I would recommend it to every pious reader, as a means of raising or quickening the spirit of devotion; of confirming his faith; of enlivening

his hope, and of kindling and increasing his love to God and man. There is scarcely a feeling of the heart from the first dawn of divine light upon the understanding, and desire after God, till the believer's triumphant flight to the celestial Paradise, which is not here expressed in language beautifully forcible and appropriate. Surely, in view of such abundant provision in this department of public and social worship, Lutherans ought to be not only satisfied, but devoutly thankful. Compare the Lutheran Hymn Book with the rude and rugged verse of Sternhold & Hopkins, and the vapid strains of Tate & Brady, and to what immense advantage does it appear, and what force is not given to my other reasons for being a Lutheran?*

3. The preaching of the gospel is an institution of our Lord, which he will perpetuate and sanction till the end of time. And here again, I conceive, that, as a Lutheran, I have great advantages. The Lutheran ministry, as a whole, is decidedly evangelical, zealous, plain,

*The Rev. Dr. S. S. Schmucker, is entitled to the cordial thanks of the church, for the sound judgment, and correct, evangelic and poetic taste, displayed in the execution of the arduous task of compiling this Hymn Book.

faithful, and practical. It consists not of metaphysical speculations, dark and powerless; nor of secular politics; nor of the traditions of men; but is generally an exposition of God's own Word; giving a just and distinguished prominence to the leading truths of the gospel applied to the consciences of the people, who are often classified, and separately addressed, as careless sinners, penitent seekers of salvation, or as sincere believers in Christ, exposed to the vicissitudes and trials of life. Many speak disrespectfully of this ministry, who never attended it, and therefore know not what it is. He is the best physician who effects the greatest number of cures; and he is the best preacher who turns the greatest number of ignorant and wicked men to Christ and holiness. As to the moral effects of Lutheran preaching, let the numerous, and powerful, and extensive revivals almost throughout the whole church, bear witness.

4. I have already discussed the subject of Lutheran doctrine; a mere passing allusion here will suffice. I love the tenets of the first born daughter of the Reformation. They are in beautiful harmony with the Bible and with each other, and their tendency is encouraging

and sanctifying. The fallen state of man; the Deity and atonement of Christ; the universal redemption of mankind; the necessity of repentance; full and free justification by faith in the Lord Jesus; the witness of the Spirit; the new birth, as the means of restoring fallen man to moral purity; Christian holiness; the necessity of entire practical conformity to the will of God; and a future state of endless retribution: these momentous truths are the absorbing themes of Lutheran sermons, and are often enforced with irresistible earnestness. On these subjects there is no hesitation, no concealment, no faltering, no "reserve," but the utmost explicitness and fidelity. For this ministry is exercised by converted men. It is an unalterable principle, that no one shall ever be admitted to it, who cannot give a satisfactory account of his personal reconciliation with God, and who does not exhibit in his life proofs that he is a "new creature." "We have believed, and therefore do we speak," is the scrutinized profession of every Lutheran preacher.

Heterodoxy and inconsistency of walk have been repeatedly laid to the charge of Lutheran ministers. I admit that men of such character have unfortunately found their way into the

sacred office; but where is the church that has been able on all occasions to guard against the artifice and intrusion of hypocrites? If there be such an one let it cast the first stone at Lutherans; for they have not been so successful. But while Lutherans allow great latitude of belief in non-essential points, they require soundness in all fundamental truth, as well as "a holy walk and conversation." And whenever a minister proves habitually delinquent, he is called to account, and if not reclaimed, expelled from the synod. If Methodists, Presbyterians, &c. are more prompt in cutting off unworthy members, it may be that it is because their system, being less republican, admits of a speedier process, or they must have greater facilities in discovering doctrinal and moral obliquities.

5. One of the most important means of usefulness in the Lutheran church, consists in catechetical instruction to the rising generation, and especially to those who propound themselves for membership. This system is very justly highly esteemed among Lutherans; it has been greatly blessed and often become the means not only of individual conversions but of powerful and extensive revivals. True, like

every other good thing it is liable to perversion, and may in some cases have been substituted for personal religion. The same may be said of baptism, the eucharist, attendance at the house of God, &c. But *abusus non tollit usum*;—the abuse of any thing does not abrogate the lawful use thereof. As I however intend to revert to this subject in the sequel, I forbear saying more for the present.

6. To the Lord's Supper, as one of the sacraments which Christ has ordained in his church, a peculiar sacredness has ever been justly attached, by sincere and well instructed Christians. It is a standing memorial of the great sacrifice which was offered to God for the sins of the world, and is one of the seals of the evangelical covenant. "By eating of this bread, and drinking of this cup," the disciples of Jesus are to "show forth his death," till he shall come to raise the dead, to judge the world, and to take his people to their everlasting home. As a means of grace, devout Christians have always realized great spiritual benefit in the use of it. Their faith in their dying Lord has been strengthened, and their love to him inflamed. They have received a deeper impression of their obligations to serve

him; and their affection for each other, while partaking of the same sacred elements, has been confirmed and increased. Among Lutherans this ordinance is administered to communicants either in a kneeling or standing posture, as they themselves prefer; accompanied by solemn and impressive exhortations, enlivened by hymns suitable to the occasion, and concluded with prayer that comes not out of feigned lips. It is not open to all indiscriminately; but only to such as profess to be, and give evidence that they are, obedient subjects of divine grace. For it is regarded by all well-instructed Lutherans as a disgrace and an offence against God and the church, to administer it knowingly, to any one who is openly wicked. "Let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." 1 Cor. xi. 28. Lutherans consider the sacramental table emphatically as "the table of the Lord," and hence they extend invitations to all christians in good standing in evangelic churches, to join them in the solemn feast.

## CHAPTER X.

I AM A LUTHERAN,—

VIII. Because in addition to the means of edification and usefulness mentioned in the last chapter, Lutherans have a variety of *prudential regulations, adapted to the advancement of piety, from which they derive great spiritual benefits.*

Such are prayer-meetings, special conferences, bible classes, &c.

1. One of the most interesting and instructive of these services, is the "Practical Conference," which usually consists of from ten to twenty or more individuals, who assemble once a week or a fortnight, for the express purpose of relating to each other their religious experience, their trials, &c., of praying with each other, and of receiving from one of their company, chosen to preside over the meeting, suitable instruction and encouragement. The interest and usefulness of these meetings are increased by hymns of praise to God, and fervent exhortation from the hearts of those familiar

with the dealings of God with the souls of his saints.

These conferences have not been established by any specific synodical legislation, but are the result of voluntary association; and designed to strengthen the weak, instruct the less informed, succor the tempted and promote vital godliness and Christian experience. They are known by different names in different Lutheran congregations. In some they are called "Meetings for Religious Conversation;" in others, "Experience Meetings,' &c.

These conferences are not of recent origin, and therefore to be enumerated among the so-called "new measures." As they partake of the nature of the Class-meetings of our Methodist brethren, it has been insinuated that we took the idea from them. But it is far more likely that the founders of Methodism were indebted to the example of the early Lutherans for their Class-meetings. Certain it is, that the meetings at present denominated, Practical Conferences, were introduced at a very early period in the Lutheran church. About the middle of the seventeenth century, the church was blessed with a mighty revival through the

instrumentality of that eminently devoted and successful preacher of the gospel, P. J. SPENER. The whole city of Frankfort was moved by a single sermon delivered by him on "the righteousness of the Pharisees and that of the children of God." Multitudes crowded into the church to hear his powerful appeals, whilst many took offence and decried him as a fanatic, declaring they would never listen to him again. It was during this revival that Spener found it necessary to appoint special meetings for prayer and religious inquiry. In these meetings he spoke personally to the people on the state of religion in their souls, in other words, he conversed with them respecting their christian experience and gave them such instruction as their respective cases required. These were emphatically *practical conferences*, or *experience meetings*. At first they were held in private houses, but subsequently in the church. In 1670 this same man of God commenced his celebrated "Collegia Pietatis," or *conference meetings*, which were designed to afford special opportunities for reading the Bible *practically* and for the strengthening of the faith of such as were converted. These also were in some sort, "experience meet-

ings."* The mantle of Spener fell upon the distinguished founder of the Orphan House at Halle, the great and good FRANKE. While engaged as professor at the university of Leipsic, Franke established meetings similar to Spener's "Collegia Pietatis," which he called "Collegium Philobiblicum." The only difference was that the former were intended for the common people, and the latter for theological students. Hence, while Spener's had been conducted in the German language, Franke's were carried on in the Greek and Hebrew. These meetings were in their nature, partly philological and partly practical. The news of them soon spread, and the number of attendants increased so rapidly, that very soon no private room sufficiently spacious to accommodate all could be obtained. It was in 1685 that Franke commenced them, just eighteen years before the birth of John Wesley the immortal founder of Methodism. It is presumed

*We cannot forbear relating the following characteristic fact, respecting Spener: Shortly before his death he directed that his body should be clothed in a white shroud, instead of the customary black one; alledging that he had long enough mourned over the corruptions of the church, and that as he now entertained a hope of brighter days for God's people, and was going to the church triumphant, he wished to be clothed in white.

that the Wesleys and their associates at the university of Oxford, who in 1729 began to read the Scriptures according to a *method* of their own for their spiritual improvement, had heard of Franke's far-famed Collegium Philobiblicum, and that the "class-meetings," are in all probability an improvement upon Spener's Collegia Pietatis.*

This historical digression will find, I trust, a sufficient justification in its design, which is, to disprove the charge of *innovation* in regard to practical conferences, as at present in vogue among Lutherans. In the mean while, it is due to truth to remark, that venerable and useful as these meetings obviously are, they are by no means of universal prevalence in the church. The writer however, was a member of one more than twenty years ago, and since then they have become more common; though the number of churches in which they have been introduced, is still comparatively small. Those persons who have been in the habit of attending them, speak in the highest terms of their usefulness in the cause of practical piety; and it is probable that when their character and

*Vide an excellent "Essay on Revivals," by Rev. R. Weiser, now pastor of the Lutheran church in Bedford, Pa.

design come to be extensively understood, and their efficient instrumentality to be more fully developed, they will be introduced in most of our churches. "Practical Conferences" are carried on wholly by laymen, the minister attending only occasionally to see that all things are conducted "decently and in order," or when peculiar circumstances demand his presence.

If meetings of this kind are not expressly appointed in Holy Scripture, as matter of absolute duty, they are in full accordance with the general tenor of the inspired books, and have the direct sanction of many particular passages. The Psalmist, full of grateful joy, exclaims, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul;" Psalm, lxvi. 16. In another place, describing the prevailing bias of his heart, he says to God, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts;" Psalm, cxix. 63. When sin and ungodliness abounded, in the degenerate days of Malachi, it is stated, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the

Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him;" Malachi, iii. 16, 17. That Christians are bound to take an affectionate interest in each other's preservation from sin, and perseverance in the ways of God, and that they are to use means for the promotion of these objects, no one can doubt, who reads the New Testament with due attention. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs: singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord:" Col. iii. 16. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;" Heb. iii. 12, 13. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching;" Heb. x. 24, 25. "Confess your faults one to

another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed;" James, v. 16.

2. In the prayer-meetings the husband and the wife, the parent and the child, the master and the servant, the young convert and the "old disciple," the day-laborer and the man of property, often meet together; and while they hear of the things of God, not only forget their several distinctions, and feel their perfect oneness in their common Lord, but are also preserved from all unworthy jealousies in their intercourse with each other. After the perplexities and cares of the world, the fightings without and the fears within, they are strengthened and comforted by the blessing of God upon their mutual sympathy and faith. The weak are encouraged, the spirit of unity is cherished; and the minds of all are stirred up by way of remembrance. While the work of God, in the conversion of sinful men, is proclaimed, the glory which is due to his name is given in cheerful songs by the united assembly. Moreover, many careless people have been brought under religious impressions by this means of grace, and others have found the Lord, whom they earnestly sought. When St. Peter was delivered out of prison at mid-

night, by the ministry of an angel, he directed his steps to the house of a Christian family in Jerusalem, where a meeting of this kind was held, even at that hour: for "many were gathered together praying;" Acts, xii. 12.

3. Special Conferences, which answer to the "quarterly meetings" of the Methodists, or the "protracted meetings" of some other denominations, may be ranked among the most successful instrumentalities of advancing the interests of Christ's kingdom in the Lutheran church. For a brief account of them, we refer the reader back to chapter ii. subdivision 3. These conferences have also been branded with the stigma of novelty, though they have been held among Lutherans ever since their establishment as a church in this country, and indeed, are as old almost as the Bible itself. A special conference is a meeting of several ministers of two or three or four days' duration, for their mutual edification by religious conversation, and the conversion of sinners and strengthening of believers by close practical preaching. If the exercises of the meeting are specially blessed, and it is thought advisable, it is prolonged from day to day and even from week to week, and thus becomes a "Protract-

ed meeting." Is there any thing in the word of God to justify this course of procedure? If the reader will turn to 2 Chron. xxx. 1—26, he will find an account of just such a special season of grace. Here we have the good king Hezekiah appointing a meeting at Jerusalem, which was to last seven days. But behold! when the work of God was revived among the backslidden Israelites, they "took counsel to keep other seven days," v. 23, "and they kept other seven days with gladness." Was not this a protracted meeting? And what was the result? It is said there was great joy in Jerusalem. Doubtless large numbers were converted and taught to look forward to a coming Savior as the author of pardon and salvation. Moreover, did not God command all the male population of Israel to appear three times a year at Jerusalem, and there engage in religious worship for a number of days in succession? Were the people not required to suspend for the time being their secular business and attend wholly to the exercises of religion? The book of the law was read and expounded, and the practical duties of religion inculcated. Who does not perceive a striking analogy between these meetings and those under consideration?

and we have no doubt, many a glorious revival was vouchsafed to Jerusalem and the whole land in consequence of those gracious seasons of extra effort. I might yet farther refer to the meetings recorded in the Acts of the apostles, and especially that remarkable one which resulted in the Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit, and was protracted at least ten days, and we know not how much longer. But the foregoing is sufficient to rescue special conferences from the brand of novelty.

The expedience of protracted meetings arises from the very nature of things. They are in accordance with the constitution of the human mind, and founded on the soundest principles of mental philosophy. We all admit, that truth must be brought into contact with the sinner's mind, before he can be converted; and we must also admit, that the same kind and amount of truth, brought rapidly and consecutively to bear upon the mind, will be likely to effect more than when presented by parts, with long intervals between. To illustrate more fully the idea now advanced, suppose a faithful pastor take charge of a congregation, whose members are unenlightened. He sees that they are unacquainted with the fundamental doctrines of

religion; most of them are living without God and hope in the world. He finds a deplorable amount of ignorance and sin among them. He comes to the conclusion that the following subjects ought to be presented fully to the people, viz. 1. The nature and awful consequences of sin; 2. The depravity of the human heart; 3. The importance and necessity of repentance; 4. The atonement of Christ; 5. The necessity of the new birth; 6. Immediate submission to Christ. Now, we will take but these six subjects; many more of equal importance might be added. It will require six weeks according to the ordinary mode of Sabbath preaching, to present these subjects to a congregation; for each to have any thing like justice done to it, will demand a whole sermon. And in any of our Lutheran congregations (where we preach but once a month,) it will require six months! Now, is it not in accordance with the nature of things, that the same amount of truth brought to bear upon the mind in two or three days, will do more good? Hence the importance of protracted meetings, during which the truth of God is constantly kept burning upon the sinner's heart.

In promoting revivals of religion, both clergy

and laymen in the Lutheran church are required never to lose sight of the fact, that without the divine influence of the Holy Spirit, all their labors will be in vain. It is the Spirit of God that must convince men of sin, melt them into humble contrition before God, and bring them to a knowledge of the truth.*

4. Those who have an aptitude for teaching children the elements of learning and of religion, find ample scope for the exercise of their powers in the Lutheran Sunday Schools, where the offspring of the poor and neglected are collected together, for the purpose of being taught to read the Holy Scriptures, and the children of the congregation generally are instructed in religion, and taught to sing the praises of God, to sanctify the Sabbath, to obey their parents, to believe in their Savior, and to love him in sincerity.

5. Religious Tract Societies are now being established. They divide neglected localities into districts, the houses of which are visited in order; and a tract is left at each. Many devout and zealous persons are employed in this kind of service, and are often brought most

*Vide ibid.

beneficially into intercourse with Sabbath-breakers, the neglecters of public worship, and other ungodly characters, as well as with the afflicted, who need temporal relief and spiritual help, and gratefully receive both.

I might proceed in enumerating various other regulations in existence among Lutherans for the promotion of piety and the advancement of God's kingdom. But as my object was simply to show, that there are abundant means of Christian edification and usefulness in the Lutheran church, and the foregoing is amply sufficient for that purpose, I forbear adding more. Surely then, I have every reason to be satisfied, and to be filled with adoring gratitude to the God of all grace. Surely, "the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage."

Why then, should I leave the church of my fathers? or why should Christians of any other denomination invite my brethren of the faith to do so? If they succeed in persuading a member of the Lutheran communion to renounce his present connection and to go over to them, what is thereby gained? Do Methodists, or Episcopalians, or Presbyterians preach a different gospel from that of Evangelic Luther-

ans? or a different mode of salvation than that of *justification by faith in Christ through grace?* Why, if even an angel from heaven should do so, the apostle has said in the name of Almighty God: "let him be accursed;" Gal. i. 7—9. Do their ministers point out an easier and nearer way to heaven? are they more faithful, more laborious, more self-denying, more devoted to the work of convincing and converting sinners and building up saints; more successful in that work; more willing to spend and be spent without an adequate compensation; more industrious in instructing the children and youth of the congregation; more prompt in visiting the sick and afflicted?—Let facts furnish the reply. Is not the system of doctrine, government, and discipline of the Lutheran church, sound to the very pith and core? Are not her distinctive features liberal, just and equal, and such as her enlightened and pious members must heartily sanction? What good then, do those expect to accomplish, who endeavor to make proselytes from the Lutheran church? Or what real advantage can such hope to obtain, who are weak and ungrateful enough to yield to the tempter, and desert the mother that begat and nourished them? Will

they find better opportunities of instruction and usefulness? If such were the fact, would this justify their departure? is our severance from communion in a church such a light matter, that our own individual interest alone may authorize it? Do Lutherans absolutely require their members to *believe what is untrue*, or *to do what is sinful?* If such be the fact, prove it, and then hasten away from such a communion as from Babylon, or from Sodom and Gomorrah. But no man, however wicked or ignorant, will assume so slanderous and revolting a position. Why then wound the feelings of God's people in the Lutheran church; pain the minister, disturb the harmony of the congregation, gratify the cormorant appetite of hungry, greedy sectarians by yielding to their proselytizing artifices, and consenting to break asunder ties so endearing and sacred as those which bind us to the church of our fathers and our kindred? It is a sin, a great wickedness in the sight of God, thus to trifle with church-privileges. It is one of the wiles of the devil, thus to carry men about "with every wind of doctrine." Those who so far forget what is due to sister churches as to stoop so low as to act as agents in making proselytes, no less than

they who become the dupes of their stratagems, are incurring an amount of guilt which should cause them to shudder in view of their responsibility on the great day of accounts! When an individual renounces his connection with the Lutheran church, in compliance with the artful insinuations and slanderous representations of certain clerical and lay "recruiting sergeants," he countenances principles which require every other member to follow his example, and which would close the door of every Lutheran church in the country and in the world. But I ask, in the name of all that is sacred, when arrangements are in progress for the overthrow of Protestant Christianity in every land, is this a time when a single Protestant testimony to the truth should be silenced? Let the answer be given in the significant words of an eloquent French writer, "No! NO! A thousand times NO!"

While I enjoy every means of personal edification, and of usefulness to the world, I cannot abandon them without betraying foul ingratitude both to God and man; and without setting an example, the consequences of which I am not prepared to answer for before the great tribunal. To do violence to the religious feel-

ings and habits of large bodies of sincere and devout people is a hazardous experiment, and one upon which a wise man would not hastily venture. It would be a sure means of turning many of them out of the way of righteousness.*

*I acknowledge myself indebted for several of the thoughts contained in this chapter, to an anonymous work published in England.

## CHAPTER XI.

I AM A LUTHERAN,—

IX. Because I most cordially approve of *the mode of admitting baptized persons to sacramental communion in the Lutheran church.*

This mode is by Confirmation, associated with a previous full course of religious or catechetical instruction. I am warmly attached to this regulation as well from my own personal experience of its happy tendency, as from my observation of its blessed effects in reference to others. Indeed I regard it as one of the most beautiful and valuable characteristics of Lutheranism, and am persuaded that no intelligent christian who is properly acquainted with it, can fail to give it his entire and hearty sanction.

CONFIRMATION is the solemn act of laying on of hands accompanied by fervent prayer, in the admission of baptized persons to the full enjoyment of christian privileges. The churches that reject this rite are but a small minority in the christian world, and even they have that

among them, in a different form, which is designed to answer the same purpose.

The Lutherans constituting by far the largest Protestant denomination in the world, (numbering about thirty millions of members,) do not as a body, believe that Confirmation was instituted by Christ or the apostles, nor do they generally profess to find sufficient evidence in the Word of God, to justify the belief that it was even practised by the apostles.

The portions of Scripture recorded Acts viii. 14, 15, and Acts, xix. 1, 6, which are usually quoted as apostolic authority for the observance of this rite, are understood by them as referring, not to the *ordinary* solemnity of confirmation, as practised in the church at the present day, but to the *miraculous* gifts of the Holy Ghost, conferred by *extraordinary officers* for an extraordinary purpose. There have indeed been some very respectable divines in the Lutheran church, and for aught I know there may be yet, who have inferred from Heb. vi. 1, 2, that "the imposition of hands" may possibly have been continued in the church as an impressive mode of invoking the divine blessing on those who were to be received into full communion with the church. The passage

from which this deduction is made, reads thus: "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptism and *the laying on of hands*, and of resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment." The inspired penman here enumerates *the laying on of hands*, among the rudiments or elementary principles of Christianity, and it is supposed by some, that although the laying on of hands was first designed to accompany the communication of the extraordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, it was nevertheless retained by the early Christians, after those powers had ceased, as a standing solemnity to mark the transition from infant-membership in the church to adult-membership. It will be perceived that this is merely a *supposition*,—a supposition however, which receives some strength from the consideration, that no other rite whatever has descended from the apostolic church, to which the above mentioned imposition of hands could allude, if it be not confirmation. But even granting that the apostles and their immediate successors practised confirmation, which the premises in

the case are not sufficiently clear to warrant, still as that presumed primitive practice was not enforced by a "thus saith the Lord," we are not obligated to conform to it any further than as its superior adaptation to accomplish good, may commend itself to us. I cannot admit that the example of the first Christians, including that of the apostles unenforced by a command is binding on us, especially in reference to a rite merely external. Such a concession would involve us in inextricable difficulties, not to say absurdities.

Confirmation, as practised among Lutherans, may be said to present two aspects.

1. It is a personal and most solemn assumption and ratification of the covenant of grace, which was recognized and sealed at our baptism. The members of the church are baptized in infancy, and though they are then, in a formal manner, acknowledged as parties to the covenant and consequently as members of the church, yet being infants and incapable of voluntary action in a moral point of view, it is not only right, but a positive duty that they should themselves, when they arrive at a proper age, come forward and personally renew and confirm the vows made in their name, by their

sponsors or representatives, when at baptism they were recognized as subjects of God's gracious covenant. God requires the heart. His people must be a willing people; and neither our services nor our persons can be an acceptable offering to him, if not accompanied with the cheerful flowing forth of the affections of the soul. Hence it is eminently proper that there should be some appropriate rite, in which adults may personally take upon themselves and ratify the solemn promises entered into in their behalf in their infancy. To afford an opportunity for the discharge of this sacred duty, appears to be one of the principal designs of confirmation.

Accordingly, when persons present themselves as candidates for this ordinance, (they should always *present themselves*, and not come merely to gratify the wishes of friends, or in compliance with the usage of the church,) they do most solemnly renew the vows made for them at their baptism. They engage, in the presence of men and angels to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life; to believe in Jesus, and to serve him in holiness and

righteousness all the days of their lives. In a word, they deliberately "join themselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, never to be forgotten."

2. The second aspect in which this rite may be viewed, exhibits it to us as a solemn mode of admitting individuals to adult church-membership, or to full communion in the church. The enjoyment of the privileges of membership in Christ's church is progressive. It commences with baptism and the special prayers of God's people; next, as the infant member grows older and the powers of the mind are developed, it includes religious instruction from the preaching of God's word, and the private labors of the pastor and members; to this is gradually added the society of the faithful followers of Christ, whose example and exhortations will afford the young member important aid in his journey toward the land of bliss; then ensue the advantages resulting from church-discipline, which consist in the watchfulness exercised by the church over the purity of individual members, in exhorting, admonishing, reproving, censuring, &c., the member who wanders from the footsteps of the Savior. And although the latter stages of this discip-

line may be painful, the erring youth will be greatly benefitted by it, and feel thankful to the church that even this severe remedy is employed to lead him to the Savior of his soul. Finally, having reached mature age and been properly instructed, the last and crowning act, is admission to full and complete membership in the church of Christ, whereby he publicly devotes himself to the service of his Savior, voluntarily presenting his soul and body as a living sacrifice upon the Christian altar. He thus, in a public and solemn manner, comes out from the world and declares himself to be a member of God's kingdom, a subject of his covenant, and a disciple of his Son. This is equivalent to what is termed in some churches, *a public profession of religion.* In the Lutheran church, this profession is made at confirmation.

Every church has some mode of receiving members into full communion, and as Christ did not prescribe any particular form, that which is the most appropriate and impressive, and has the least tendency to nourish superstition, may be regarded as the best. I have no objection to the Presbyterian, or Methodist mode; nay, I am willing to admit that their

modes may be more appropriate than ours for their respective churches; but at the same time I maintain that ours is decidedly the best for us. Of this, extensive experience has long since convinced me. Confirmation, with its antecedent and attendant religious exercises, is admirably adapted to make deep and salutary impressions, as well upon the assembled congregation who witness the solemn scenes, as upon those who are the personal participants of them. Moreover, the Master has again and again sanctioned this rite with his smiles, and blessed it on countless occasions, as the means of awakening sinners and reviving and strengthening believers. So long therefore, as any degree of fidelity and spirituality mark the character of ministers and people, the rite of confirmation with the previous religious instruction connected with it, will be held in very high esteem and be practised in Evangelical Lutheran churches with great confidence in the promised blessing of God.

Having admitted that the evidence in support of apostolic example for this rite, is not conclusive, and that if it even were, not being enforced by an injunction, it would form no obligatory rule for us, the question may be pro-

posed: "why, under such circumstances, do Lutherans still adhere to it?"—Because the Great Head of the church, having in this case, as well as many other similar ones, given no specific directions, but left us to adopt such form as in consistence with the general principles of the gospel, might most strongly commend itself, I am of opinion that this rite is peculiarly adapted to the very purpose for which it is employed. It is therefore on grounds of Christian expedience or utility, that Lutherans hold to confirmation; they prefer it decidedly to every other outward mode of renewing the covenant of baptism and making a public profession of religion. They know assuredly, that it is acceptable to that God who has so frequently sanctioned and blessed it.

To this consideration may be added the fact, that confirmation lays claim to great antiquity. The laying on of hands was a common usage under the Old Testament dispensation. Thus when Moses constituted Joshua his successor, God appointed him to lay his hands upon him.* Jacob laid his hands upon Ephraim and Manasseh when he gave them his last blessing.†

*Numb. xxvii. 18. †Gen. xlviii. 14.

The high-priest stretched out his hands to the people as often as he pronounced the divine blessing upon them.* This practice was also frequent in sacrifices; the person bringing the victim, *laid his hands on the head, &c.*†

All this was indeed not confirmation, but still it marks the practice of the imposition of hands as ancient and solemn, and always connected with religious or devotional exercises.

In the New Testament we find, besides that already referred to, (Heb. vi. 1—2,) at least four kinds or occasions of the imposition of hands recounted. The first by Christ himself, to express an authoritative benediction;‡ the second, in the healing of diseases;§ the third, in conferring the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit,‖ and the fourth in setting apart persons to sacred office.¶

Though none of these instances affords a clear example of confirmation, nor even alludes to one unless it be that recorded in the epistle to the Hebrews, yet, if the apostles received into full communion members who had been baptized in their infancy, it appears to me to

*Levit. ix. 22. †Ibid i. 4. ‡Matt. xix. and Mark x. 16.
§Mark xvi. 18, Acts xxviii. 8. ‖Acts viii. 17, and xix. 6.
¶Acts vi. 6, xiii. 3, 1 Tim. iv. 14.

be not improbable that they did so by the imposition of hands and prayer, in other words, by confirmation, because this mode of doing it would have fallen in most harmoniously with the well known and long established usages of the Jews, and have precisely coincided with the spirit and custom of the apostolic age. This probability is heightened by the historical fact, that the Jews were in the habit of presenting their children at the age of thirteen years, to the congregation, that they might be publicly examined, renew the covenant which had been made for them in their infancy, and take upon themselves their obligations of obedience to the divine law.* On these occasions the elders of the Synagogue laid their hands upon them and pronounced them *the sons of the congregation of Israel.* The objection that the laying on of hands by the apostles (Acts, viii. 17, and xix. 6,) was accompanied by the *extraordinary influences* of the Holy Ghost, does not appear to be a solid one, because the ceremony was attended by the same miraculous effects in cases of *ordination to the gospel ministry,* (1 Tim. iv. 14, and 2 Tim. i. 6,) and yet

* See Buxtorf Syn. Jud. cap. 3.

the practice of ordaining in the same mode is still retained in churches that reject confirmation, though they make no pretensions to confer the Holy Ghost on such occasions. To condemn confirmation then, simply because we cannot thereby impart those supernatural gifts, would be no less fatal to ministerial ordination.

As our Lord, when he instituted the new seal of his covenant, did not introduce a novel rite, but selected baptism which had long been used among the Jews in the reception of proselytes, and appointed it to a new purpose, is it not very reasonable to suppose that the imposition of hands accompanied by prayer,—a practice so well understood among the Jews, should be adopted as the mode of admitting members to full communion in his church? But whether or not, it is certain that confirmation can be traced to a very early period in the church. Dr. Campbell* thinks it arose in the second century from the right which the bishop claimed to confirm the baptisms that were administered by the presbyters and deacons of his church. Towards the close of the second century, it was undoubtedly in vogue, for Tertullian men-

*See Lectures on Ecclesiastical History.

tions a number of superstitious practices that were associated with it about that period. The ceremony was performed immediately after baptism, provided the bishop was present, and in his absence, was deferred until the candidates could present themselves, or if children, until they could be presented by others to him. In that age the imposition of hands was regarded as essential to the completion of baptism, and was usually performed by the bishops, who professed to be the successors of the apostles, and as such, empowered to communicate the Holy Ghost through the act of confirmation. "For their convenience the two festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide were chosen as the proper seasons for adults and children, when the candidates were required to assemble from all places in the bishop's church, and the part which the bishops then performed was that of the imposition of hands, while the act of baptism, might be done by presbyters and deacons. Such as had been baptized in the interval, and converts from heresy who had received baptism in their own sects, now received only the imposition of hands with its accompanying ceremonies."

But whatever superstitious frippery may have

disfigured the rite in question in the second and third centuries, and in later ages among the Roman Catholics; in the Lutheran church it is regarded, so far as my knowledge extends, in no other light than that in which I have represented it. The apology of the Augsburg Confession contains the following declaration on this subject: *Confirmation is a rite which was transmitted to us from the fathers, but which the church never regarded as essential to salvation; for it is not supported by a divine command.** Lutherans make no pretension to impart the Holy Ghost by confirmation, they ascribe no magic virtue to the laying on of hands, nor to the form of words accompanying that act; they claim for them no other than their appropriate moral influence, and are convinced that they had not anciently, and have not at present, any other in the hands of bishops. The testimony of the illustrious Calvin on this subject, well deserves a place in this article. He speaks of it in the highest terms, (Institutes, book iv. chap. 19, §. 4.) It deserves, he thinks, "to be regarded as sacred and solemn." He adds, that he "highly approves of it, and

*Formula Concordiæ, p. 201.

wishes it were restored to its primitive use, uncorrupted by superstition." In book iv. chap 19, §. 13, he again says: "I sincerely wish that we retained the custom (of confirming) which I have stated was practised among the ancients,"—and his principle argument in his subsequent remarks is founded on the catechetical instruction which was connected with it, and by which such salutary effects are produced, as we have already had occasion to remark.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CONFIRMATION CONTINUED.

Having examined the nature and design of confirmation, I shall now proceed to set forth its benefits, and the qualifications necessary to a profitable reception of it.

The great value of this rite consists, not in the simple act of laying on of hands, nor even in the form of words uttered by the minister; for, apart from the knowledge of divine truth, and the impression which it is designed to make upon the heart, the whole ceremony, so far as the recipient of it is concerned, is little else than a solemn mockery. Confirmation then, must be considered in connection with the course of instruction which precedes it, and as the closing act of a series of religious efforts intended, and with the divine blessing adapted to prepare the candidates for "the communion of saints;" that is, for their communion with Christ as their Head, and with God's people as members, of which communion the Lord's Supper is the visible sign.

Some time before a Lutheran minister in-

tends to administer confirmation, he invites all who desire to take up the cross and follow the Redeemer, to meet him in the church or lecture-room. Among those invited, are particularly such as are religiously disposed, or awakened to a sense of their sins, and others, whether baptized or not, who are old enough to make a personal profession of religion. In order to enforce his invitation, he seeks a private interview with all whose duty it is to attend his public ministrations, but have not yet been admitted to full membership, and urges upon them the necessity of this duty. All are exhorted to attend the contemplated course of religious instruction, with the understanding however that no one will be required or even permitted by the discipline of the church, to be confirmed, unless the religious instruction is the means of awakening his heart and producing a sincere desire to consecrate himself to God.

The "catechetical lectures" now commence; each catechumen is provided with Luther's Smaller Catechism, which, so far as may be deemed advisable, is committed to memory, together with accompanying proof-texts. The minister explains the object of the instruction,

the nature and design of baptism, of confirmation and the Lord's Supper; he aims at making them acquainted with themselves and with God, with their own character as fallen and hell-deserving creatures, and the character of Christ as the only Savior of a perishing world; the Holy Spirit is represented as the only efficient agent, and the inspired Word of God as the instrumental means of renewing and sanctifying their nature. The whole plan of salvation, every important doctrine and precept of the gospel, especially the nature and indispensable necessity of repentance and faith, of thorough conversion to God and of newness and holiness of life, are elucidated and inculcated in as simple and earnest a manner as possible, so that the youngest and weakest may fully understand. No scriptural efforts are unemployed, to prevail on them to turn to the Lord with their whole heart; to yield without delay to the claims of God and to become and forever remain his humble and obedient children. The meetings are opened with singing and prayer, and closed in the same manner; the catechumens themselves, amply instructed on the subject of prayer, if qualified publicly to lead in this duty, are sometimes called on to

offer up the closing prayer. The sacred Scriptures are made the only basis of all these lectures; they are the polar-star of the Lutheran minister in imparting religious instruction; with them he lays the foundation, rears the superstructure and adds the cap-stone; the catechism he also uses faithfully, not however to determine the sense of God's word, but as a summary of it, to direct him in his general course and facilitate and simplify his lectures. For every meeting with his beloved pupils, he is careful to prepare himself previously in his closet, and by prayerfully reading the Bible and other devotional works calculated to interest and instruct his own heart and solemnize his own feelings. Before he finishes his deeply interesting and important work, he takes occasion to converse with every catechumen on the great subject of his personal salvation. At these interviews he ascertains from each, the state of his heart, the measure of his doctrinal knowledge, his religious experience, his peculiar trials and difficulties, &c., and is enabled to form a tolerable estimate of the qualifications of every one for the approaching solemnities. This course of instruction is continued at first, once, and subsequently, twice

or thrice a week, for two or three months, and often longer.

"Such is the course of instruction substantially pursued by the great mass of our divines, with the variations which the habits and predilections of each may dictate, and the exercise of which, the principles of Christian liberty, so highly prized, and so fully enjoyed in the Lutheran church, secure to all; yet has it not unfrequently been the theme of invidious clamor to the illiterate enthusiast, and of animadversion from others better informed. But we have never heard, nor do we expect ever to hear, of a single truly pious pastor, who faithfully attended to this instruction, and did not regard it as a highly blessed means of bringing souls to Christ. By unconverted ministers, this duty, like all others, will be performed as a mere formality, and confer little benefit on those who attend on it. But in the hands of the great mass of our pastors, it is nothing else than a series of meetings for prayer, singing, exhortation and individual personal interview, between them and those who profess a concern for salvation; in which, without adopting the novel nomenclature of the day, they can enjoy all the facilities and afford to their hear-

ers all the benefits aimed at, and doubtless often attained by others, in what are termed anxious meetings, inquiry meetings, class meetings, private conferences, &c. &c. Indeed, the friends of this good old custom are delighted to see the several denominations, under different appellations, adopting the substance of the same thing; nor do we care by what name the thing is known, so that God is glorified, and sinners are saved."*

The instruction ended, an examination of the catechumens takes place, at which the pastor presides and the church-officers are witnesses.† After the examination, the minister recommends to the officers, as many of the applicants for full communion in the church, as he thinks are qualified; and their cases decided, all who have been deemed worthy, are confirmed, that is, they are permitted publicly to renew and ratify their baptismal promises and by

*Pop. Theol.

†In some neighborhoods this examination is held in the church in the presence of the whole congregation, but experience as well as the nature of the exercise has shown, that the object can be much better accomplished, if conducted more privately and by a *personal inquiry with each individual respecting the evidence of his own personal piety*, instead of a general examination on the doctrines and duties of Christianity.

a public profession, to dedicate themselves to the service of Him who loved them and gave himself for them. Those of the candidates who had not been baptized, enter into the same engagements preparatory to their baptism, which are made by such as are confirmed. In these cases, some of our ministers do not deem confirmation necessary while others do. As the Christian cannot renew his vows to God too often, even though it should be every day, there is certainly no impropriety in administering confirmation to those adults who have just been baptized, and it may have a beneficial effect.

The ceremony of confirmation is thus performed.—First, several appropriate questions are proposed; these being answered in the affirmative, (which with the prayer of the officiating minister, is considered the essential part of the act itself,) the catechumens kneel at the altar, and the pastor laying his hands on each one as he passes around, solemnly invokes the blessing of God upon him in a short prayer. He then extends to each the hand of brotherly fellowship, and in the name of the whole congregation, acknowledges him as a member of the church, and entitled to all its privileges, so

long as his deportment shall correspond with the solemn promises which he has just made.

It is accordingly the public and solemn renewal of the baptismal covenant, as the concluding act of a previous and full course of religious instruction, which is regarded as confirmation, and not the imposition of hands; indeed the latter, though an appropriate religious practice, always connected with it, is not even considered essential.

The foregoing view of confirmation, including the preparatory course of instruction and the attending circumstances, will enable the intelligent and unbiassed mind to form some idea of its advantages. I will only yet remark, that in addition to the special prayer of the officiating pastor for the subject of this rite, the fervent supplications of the assembled congregation of God's people, are also enlisted in his behalf. His religious obligations, though not increased, are more deeply impressed upon his mind, and this will have a tendency to keep him faithful and diligent in the duties of Christian life, to make him watchful and prayerful, and we may justly hope, to prepare him the better for the reception of those influences of the Holy Spirit, which are necessary to aid

and guide him in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless. As he confirms the obligations arising from his covenant-relation to Jehovah, and willingly renews his vows of self-consecration to him; so God, by his ministering servant, confirms all his promises of grace and mercy, so that when this rite is duly administered, and duly received, it can hardly fail to prove the occasion of the richest blessings. It would be dishonoring the great Head of the church to suppose that a surrender of all we are and have, in a manner so solemn and serious, and withal, so intelligent and voluntary, should not be highly acceptable to him. He has declared that he will honor those who honor him; that he will confess before his Father and his holy angels, all who sincerely confess him before men, and though heaven and earth should pass away, not one jot or tittle of his promises shall fail. Often has his sanctifying and comforting grace descended like the dew of heaven, on occasions of confirmation; and thanks to his unmerited grace, many humble believers can testify, from happy experience, that when they sealed their covenant with God, by renewed vows of fidelity, they found themselves "sealed with the

Holy Spirit" unto the day of eternal redemption.

"The orthodox and pious Knapp speaks advisedly, when he remarks, that confirmation, in the cases of many, is followed, as experience teaches, by the most blessed effects, through their whole life. 'And if,' he continues, 'its advantages do not always *immediately* appear, they often manifest themselves in after years; for the seed which was sown in the heart frequently lies concealed a long time ere it comes up.' Both he, and Morus, (in the Epitome, &c., p. 238 of Schneider's German translation,) exhort the pastor to be careful and conscientious in the performance of the duties which are connected with this 'laudable custom.' Many, says Dr. Lochman, in his History, &c. of the Evang. Luth. church, p. 158, date the beginning of their real conversion to God from their confirmation."*

The qualifications requisite to a profitable reception of this rite, remain to be stated. Believing the Lutheran Formula of Discipline corresponds on this point with the principles of the gospel, I shall be guided by that in my remarks.

* Essays on Confirmation in Lutheran Observer, June 15th, 1832.

From that Formula I learn, that the candidates for confirmation, must be "obedient subjects of divine grace, that is, they must either be genuine Christians, or satisfy the church-council that they are sincerely endeavoring to become such."

All mankind are the subjects of divine grace, for all are more or less the recipients of his unmerited favor. Those who have been born in a Christian land and have an opportunity to enjoy Christian privileges, are the *special* subjects of God's grace, being favored with the special grace of his gospel. But candidates for confirmation must be "*obedient* subjects of divine grace, that is, they must either be genuine Christians, or satisfy the church-council that they are sincerely endeavoring to become such." Now, individuals who are awakened to a sense of their religious duties and anxious to be reconciled to God, have, to a certain extent, been obedient to divine grace, or they would not be in this *awakened* and *anxious* condition. It will not be maintained that persons of this description are converted, that they have "saving faith," or are genuine Christians. The most that can be said of them is, that they are penitent, inquiring, seeking sinners; they

are, as it were, in a state of transition from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of Satan to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Such persons then, though not radically converted, are nevertheless, according to the Lutheran Discipline, suitable candidates for confirmation, and therefore bound to present themselves for admission to adult-membership in Christ's church, and his ministers have no right to repel them. If the Lord himself were personally on earth, and they should humbly approach him confessing and mourning over their guilt, and promising a faithful use of the measure of grace, however small, already bestowed upon them, the general benevolence of his character and the superabounding riches of his mercy, are a pledge that *He* would not reject them. No, verily, *He* who in the days of his flesh so often fulfilled the prediction: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench,"* and who, in the plenitude of his unsearchable grace, deigned to eat with publicans and sinners in the hope of recovering them from the error of their ways; would welcome them to his communion,

*Isaiah, xlii. 3.

and diligently employ the occasion to strengthen their good desires and establish them in their upright efforts to become his obedient followers.

This view of the question before me, so obviously in accordance with the practice and theory of the Lutheran church, falls in no less with the system of my Methodist brethren, which prescribes an anxious "desire to flee from the wrath to come," as the pre-requisite for admission to the table of the Lord. But what is best of all, it harmonizes with the spirit of the gospel and with examples of admission to church-membership recorded on its inspired pages. To refer to and examine those examples, would extend this article, already too long, beyond my prescribed limits.

However desirable it is, that all who are received into full communion in the church, should have bright evidences of their conversion, and undoubted assurance of faith and of their acceptance with God, yet I think these high attainments are not *essential* to a profitable reception of confirmation, or of any religious ordinance. Christ invited all who "labor and are heavy laden to come unto him," and never rejected the trembling penitent, though

that penitent was merely "framing his doings to turn unto the Lord," and had advanced no further than to place his foot, as it were, upon the threshhold of the sanctuary. Moreover, the gospel of Christ with all its promises, his church with all her institutions, are designed for the encouragement and salvation of the humble and contrite. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."* "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word."† Do you therefore mourn in bitterness of soul for your sins, and feel that God would be just, if he were to punish you with everlasting destruction from his presence and the glory of his power? Christ bids you come to him just as you are,—with all your misery and all your guilt,—to take his yoke upon you,—to profess him before men, and to follow him in the way of his appointment. He urges you to come to his ordinances, and with joy to draw water from these wells of salvation. And all his invitations are accompanied with the gracious promise, that "him that cometh, he

* Psalms, li. 17. † Isaiah, lxvi. 2.

will in no wise cast out." Fear not, trembling sinner, to approach the altar, and renew your baptismal vows in the rite of confirmation; you may there find the Lord Jesus Christ, whose good pleasure it is to administer unto those who mourn in Zion, and to appoint unto them "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'

But I must return to the point from which I have somewhat wandered; and here a very important question presents itself for consideration, viz. How are we to know whether a man is a *genuine christian*, or whether he is *sincerely and actually endeavoring* to become one? Can we short-sighted mortals read the hidden thoughts or explore the secret motives of our neighbor? If any minister or set of church-officers lay claim to such profound wisdom, let them produce their credentials from the Most High, under his broad seal of miracles; but if they cannot do this, their pretensions are entitled to no more credit than those of the astrologer who casts nativities from the aspect of the planets. God has wisely reserved to himself the prerogative of *discerning spirits*. "I, Jehovah, search the heart. I try the

reins."* It appears then, that the REALITY of conversion, or even of *sincere anxiety* to be converted, cannot be laid down as the ground of admission to adult-membership, because I have not the means of positively ascertaining the existence of that reality. I often cannot detect a perjury in the custom-house, or dishonesty in the common affairs of life; how then can I decide whether he who recounts his religious experience, or asserts his anxiety to become a christian, is not a hypocrite? If it be answered: "*By their fruits ye shall know them;*" I reply,—even so, BY THEIR FRUITS, that is, by their external life,—their walk 'and conversation,'—but not by their inward experience, their secret exercises, or that which passes in their own breasts and is known only to God and themselves. The church of God, so far as its outward ordinances are concerned, is altogether *visible;* and it would be absurd to make an *invisible* quality the criterion of *visible* communion. If then I am incompetent to determine with certainty who is and who is not a genuine Christian, and cannot therefore in the nature of things, make the *reality* of conversion the test of admission, what is to be done?—

*Jer. xvii. 10.

Answer: The gospel informs me that "faith worketh by love," or in other words, that regeneration of heart exhibits itself by corresponding acts of obedience; when therefore, according to my best knowledge, I perceive that love to God and man, which is the legitimate fruit of living faith in Jesus Christ, or those acts of obedience which are the known and regular effects of regeneration, I am bound to account their possessor a brother and to embrace him accordingly. So also when I have reason to believe that I behold those endeavors which necessarily result from sincere anxiety to become a Christian, it is my duty to regard him who puts forth such endeavors, as sincere in his professions, as an "obedient subject of divine grace," and to extend to him all the facilities at my disposal and encourage him in his sincere intentions.

I accordingly conclude, that *a credible profession of Christianity*, in relation to the one class of individuals, and *a credible profession of sincere anxiety to become a Christian*, in reference to the other, is all that I have a right to require from candidates for confirmation. I may be deceived; my utmost caution may be, and often has been, ineffectual to prevent hypo-

crites and other unworthy individuals from entering into the church;—I am not omniscient. But I have no right to suspect sincerity, to refuse privileges, or to inflict censure, where I can put my finger upon nothing repugnant to the love of God and the fruits of faith, or to the diligent efforts of upright desire.

I have great pleasure in assuring my readers that the conclusion at which I have now arrived, accords very nearly with the result of a discussion on the "Visible Church," by one of the ablest theological writers of our country; I allude to the late distinguished DR. MASON, of New York. He sums up his ideas on this point, in the following language:—"*A profession, then, of faith in Christ, and of obedience to him, not discredited by other traits of character, entitles an adult to the privileges of his church.*"*

*See Christ. Mag. v. i. p. 22.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CONFIRMATION CONTINUED.

Many objections have been urged against confirmation, but for the most part they proceed from a want of acquaintance with its nature and advantages, from its occasional abuse and from sectarian prejudices. They mostly need little more than a simple statement, to expose their fallacy. I shall therefore dispose of them in a very summary manner.

It is objected—

1. *That confirmation consists principally in committing the catechism to memory, and in being pronounced worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper.* From what has been said, it is abundantly evident that this is altogether an unfounded assertion, without even the shadow of truth to extenuate its turpitude.

2. *That it is an assumption of new and burdensome duties.* This objection evinces a total misapprehension of the rite, and involves gross ignorance of the general relation which we sustain to God. Whether we are confirmed or not, we are all solemnly bound to repent and

be converted and live wholly unto God, and confirmation contemplates no more than this, and therefore imposes no obligations that were not previously upon us.

3. *That it is the means of introducing people into the church at too early an age.*—This objection lies not against the rite itself, but against its application. Under the Old Testament dispensation the custom was, to receive candidates into church-membership at the age of twelve and thirteen; in latter days our Presbyterian and Methodist brethren have frequently admitted them at an earlier period. The great majority of those who receive confirmation in the Lutheran church in this country, are from fifteen to twenty years of age; too many of them alas, defer it to a later period. Are those who are old enough deliberately and voluntarily to engage in the service of sin and Satan, and to prepare themselves to lie down in "everlasting burnings," too young to covenant with God, and dedicate themselves to his service? Lutherans never confirm them at an age earlier than this.

4. *That it is a mere external ceremony submitted to by compulsion, or as a matter of course.* This is an argument against its abuse, and may

be employed with equal force against baptism, against a public profession of religion as it is sometimes practised in sister churches, against every religious ordinance and indeed against religion in general. But the abuse of a religious rite does not abolish its proper use.

5. *That it is a scheme for making proselytes.* If the "scheme" succeeds well in making proselytes to Christ the objection is one of the highest commendations, and I would on this ground alone warmly recommend it to others. But Lutheran "proselytes" are generally the lambs of their own flocks, but if they can also gather in those who are "wandering on the dark mountains of sin," every true Christian will bid them "God speed." But for one church to charge another with endeavoring to make proselytes, in this age of unparalleled sectarianism, is venturing on *delicate* ground. It rather behooves all to lay their hands upon their mouths, and their mouths into the dust, and plead *guilty!*

6. *That it is a remnant of popery.* This is an unfortunate objection; for if confirmation was not practised by the apostles, it certainly was in use in the *second* century. Every one acquainted with church history, knows this.

But popery was not introduced until the beginning of the *seventh* century. Is it a relic of popery because in the fifteenth century, Pope Eugenius erected it into a sacrament? then matrimony and ministerial ordination are also remnants of popery; for both are regarded as sacraments in that corrupt church. Then Calvin also countenanced popery, for he was a warm advocate of the rite of confirmation.

7. *That persons confirmed, frequently violate their promises in after life.* So do those who make a profession of religion in any other mode; shall all religious profession therefore forever cease? Many who enter into the matrimonial covenant, violate their engagements in subsequent life, must that holy and divinely instituted state therefore be abolished? But the objection is too frivolous to deserve notice.

8. *That it was not appointed by Christ nor practised by the apostles.* Neither were Sunday schools, tract societies, Bible and temperance societies, &c.; nor do we read that they recommended special days of thanksgiving, and of humiliation and prayer. Neither the "Westminster Confession," so much revered by one branch of Christ's church; nor the "Book of Common Prayer," so warmly commended by

another; nor the "Book of Discipline," so highly esteemed by a third, was appointed by Christ, or observed in all their detailed minutiæ by the apostles. There are many practices in the church of God at present, which are in themselves excellent, and worthy of all praise, but yet cannot claim the authority of specific divine appointment or of apostolic example. The objection accordingly proves too much, and therefore entirely fails. Whether confirmation was practised by the apostles or not, is *a mooted point;* many good and wise men of different denominations, especially in the church of England, think it was.* But in the Lutheran church the custom rests upon a different basis; they value it highly and adhere to it with decided preference, on the ground of *utility*. If candidates are suitably prepared personally to renew the covenant of grace and enter into full communion, I can think of nothing more appropriate as a mode of receiving them, than the rite of confirmation. It is so simple and at the same time so solemn, so significant and affecting, that it cannot fail to impress both the new

*I would here take occasion to observe that the views and practices of the German Reformed church on this subject, very much or entirely resemble those of the Lutherans.

members and the whole congregation with a deep sense of God's infinite mercy and their own obligations to love and serve him.

9. *That it is indirectly elevated above the rank of a sacrament; bishops perform confirmation, while baptism and the eucharist are administered by the inferior clergy.* This indeed strikes me as an inconsistency, but the objection applies not to the Lutheran church. They have no "inferior clergy" in point of grade or privilege. *They are all bishops in their own churches*, belonging to the same order and enjoying the same rights; the principal differences existing among them, are those which arise from inherent personal advantages, such as superior talents, learning, piety, usefulness, &c. This difficulty then does not attach to them, and must be settled with "diocesan episcopacy."

10. *That it is superfluous, inasmuch as the Lord's Supper answers every purpose contemplated by confirmation, and is liable to no exception.* Among all the objections urged and dwelt upon with so much emphasis by Dr. MILLER, of Princeton, this is the only one that can apply to the Lutheran church. In reply, I ask, if we have in the Lord's Supper

just such a solemnity as we need for the end in question, why have our brethren of the Presbyterian church introduced a ceremony of their own, whereby a profession of religion is made? Do they not require candidates for adult-membership to appear before their "church-session," and enter into certain engagements, preparatory to receiving the holy supper?—do they not also in some churches, call forth candidates in the presence of the whole congregation, and exact certain promises from them, as pre-requisite to their admission to full communion? now what is this else but a specific "transaction or solemnity by which young people who have been baptized in infancy, may be called to recognize their religious obligations, and, as it were, take upon themselves the profession and the vows made on their behalf in baptism?"*—in a word, what is it but another mode of confirmation, with the exception that it is not accompanied by the laying on of hands and all those solemn and affecting circumstances, nor preceded by that protracted and highly beneficial course of religious instruction, which characterize and give so much interest and value to the usage ob-

*Infant Baptism, p. 117.

served among Lutherans? If accordingly, the Lord's Supper renders confirmation needless and useless in the Lutheran church, why does it not supersede certain forms or usages, preliminary to the celebration of the supper among Presbyterians? It would seem therefore that a special solemnity as a mode of admission to the Lord's Supper, is necessary; the want of it is sensibly felt and provided for in most churches, and the solemnity which commends itself most strongly to the understanding and hearts of Lutherans, is the very rite that I now advocate.

Moreover, with all deference for the learning of my venerable and justly venerated opponent, I would ask, whether there is not a difference between *admission* to church-privileges and the *enjoyment* of them? The person who is to be confirmed is in a course of reception into full communion, but he who partakes of the Lord's Supper is already in the possession of that blessing. Confirmation designates transition from infant to adult-membership, as also does the making of a profession of religion among our Presbyterian brethren; but sacramental communion publishes the completion of that transition, and is to be regarded

rather as one of the privileges of the new relation for which application is made, than as the mode of conferring that relation. If Lutherans are mistaken, why do not their dissenting brethren at once admit applicants to the Lord's Supper, without any intermediate form whatever?—While they then *in theory* deny the propriety of this rite, does not their own procedure seem to indicate that *in practice* they feel its necessity, and have therefore adopted a substitute?

But there is another reason why I am compelled to oppose the doctor's view. The hold which this ancient custom has upon the members, enables the ministers to bring within their reach and under the influence of their instructions, a class of youth whose attention they could not otherwise so fully procure. They thus have opportunities to adapt their religious teaching to the capacities and wants of the young and inexperienced, which they could not do in the pulpit. They can create and keep alive attention by the questions they propound, and bring their pupils into immediate contact with saving knowledge, and oblige them to feel that *they alone are now the persons who are concerned.* These opportunities are

such as every faithful minister of Christ will rejoice to find, and will conscientiously improve; and wo to that minister of the church who, possessing them, does not make the most of them? If they relinquish the custom of confirmation, it will in all probability be an abolition of the annual catechizing of youth, and they should thus deprive themselves of one of the most effective and successful instrumentalities which God Almighty has placed in their hands, and that too in reference to a class of individuals who have attained to an age, which is peculiarly interesting, and renders special attention particularly necessary.*

The testimony of the Rev. Professors ROBINSON and HODGE on this subject, shall conclude this article:

"It is moreover not to be denied, that this system of instruction, in the hands of a faithful pastor affords one of the most powerful means that can be devised of operating upon the youthful mind, and forming it, under God, to habits, and feelings, and principles of virtue and religion. The usual time of confirmation is about

*See a very able and lucid article on confirmation, by the Rev. Dr. MAYER, of the German Reformed church, which appeared in the paper of that church (if we mistake not) in the year 1832.

the age of puberty, or from the thirteenth to the sixteenth year;* and custom has ordained that every one shall take upon himself the solemn obligations imposed by this rite. The youthful mind is at this period in its most susceptible state, and most open to conviction, and to the influence of the thrilling motives and tender remonstrances, which a good shepherd knows how to urge in behalf of Him who was 'meek and lowly of heart.' He meets his youthful flock frequently, and has the opportunity, if he does his duty, of becoming thoroughly acquainted with their different characters and dispositions; so that it is his fault alone, if he be not able to apply to each the instructions and exhortations which the nature of the case requires. In its present shape, this system owes its birth to the pious Spener; and through this institution that godly man still exerts an amount of influence that is incalculable: Have not the churches of our land reason to blush, when they look upon what is thus done in other lands for the religious education of the young?" —*Prof. Robinson.*

"In the Lutheran church, you probably

* In the United States the usual time is from the fourteenth to the twentieth year.

know, it is customary that boys at the age of fourteen, and girls at fifteen, should be confirmed; that is, be called upon to assume their baptismal vows, and solemnly recognize themselves as members of the church. That there are serious evils attending this usage, is very obvious, but that much good is effected by the pastoral attention to the young, which it occasions, cannot be denied. The candidates for confirmation, each year, are formed into a class or classes, to which it is the pastor's duty to devote several hours in every week, instructing them in the principles of the gospel and of their own particular church. This course of instruction continues through the year; and as every child must be confirmed, the whole mass of the people, rich and poor, from the king's son to the children of the peasant, are regularly indoctrinated in the Christian system. The degree of fidelity with which this duty is performed, depends on the character of the pastor; but it may be remarked that even the rationalists, in general, retain the use of Luther's catechism and other evangelical formulas in the instruction of the young. I have witnessed few scenes more impressive than the induction of one of these little flocks of the

lambs of Christ, into his sacred fold. On the day appointed for this service they came to the church, with their pastor at their head. Their entrance was greeted with a burst of cheerful music, in which all hearts and voices joined. Arranged before the pulpit, the pastor proceeded to explain to them the situation in which they stood. Consecrated to God in baptism, they had been given to the church by their parents; but now having attained an age at which they are capable of acting for themselves, having been instructed in the doctrines and requirements of the Christian religion, and in the faith and discipline of their own church; they were to decide whether they would remain in that church, receive its doctrines, and submit to its watchful care. For the satisfaction of those present, their pastor examined them on the history and doctrines of the Bible, received their profession of faith, and solemn assent to be regarded as under the guardianship of the church. They knelt before him, the name and blessing of God was invoked upon them, and they arose in a new relation to the household of faith."—*Prof. Hodge.*

## CHAPTER XIV.

I AM A LUTHERAN,—

X. *Because I agree with and prefer the Lutheran view of the Lord's Supper.*

I have already repeatedly referred to this subject, and shall therefore not dwell extensively on it at present. But before I proceed I must premise, that it is an established principle among Lutherans, not to exact uniformity of sentiment on minor points. While they regard the Bible as the only and sufficient rule of faith, and the Augsburg Confession as a correct methodical exponent of the fundamental truths of the Scriptures, they at the same time "agree to differ," when the rights of conscience require it, in non-essentials. Accordingly, in relation to the *precise nature* of the Eucharist and the *mode* of the divine presence in that ordinance, as well as on all other subjects not clearly determined in the Word of God, they have long since settled down in the happy conviction, that it is their right to adopt those views which seem best to accord with the teachings of inspiration, while none shall be

permitted to molest them or make them afraid.

As to the outward elements in this ordinance, Lutherans hold, that though the Savior undoubtedly used unleavened bread, as none other, even in the smallest quantity, was permitted to be in a Jewish family during the Passover, yet as this was a mere circumstance, and the disciples subsequently paid no regard to it, the kind of bread is of no importance, any more than are its forms, the fact of its being broken, the time of administration, the position of the communicants, &c. But they do believe that it is absolutely wrong to deny the cup to the laity, and that to a valid celebration of this sacrament the wine no less than the bread must be given to the communicant. Hence the Romish church, which in the 15th century commenced withholding the cup, plainly violate our Lord's express command: "drink ye ALL of this cup," and have thus essentially corrupted this divine ordinance.

As prayer is a necessary accompaniment of a religious rite, and our Savior gave thanks and blessed the elements, so also in the Lutheran church, they are consecrated by prayer, that is, the Lord's prayer and the words of the

institution are rehearsed, and fervent supplications made for the blessing of God upon the whole transaction. None but regular ministers of the gospel who act in the stead of Christ, are allowed to conduct the administration.

The design of the ordinance, as set forth in the liturgy of the church is,—

1st. *Commemorative.* "This do," said our Lord, "in remembrance of me;" and, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup," adds the apostle, "*ye do shew the Lord's death till he come;*" that is, ye do call to mind and exhibit to yourselves and all around, the death of Christ as the early foundation of your hopes of salvation. Accordingly, it is not simply of Christ our Savior in general that we are reminded, but also and especially of his sufferings and death as an atonement for the sins of the whole world, and of the glorious scheme of redemption based upon his atonement.

2dly. *Sealing.* As we are sensuous beings, the Master selected two material elements cognizable by the senses, bread and wine, and ordained them to be pledges, or *seals*, or tangible assurances that we are made partakers of this body and blood, or in other words, of the

blessings of salvation purchased by the sacrifice of his body and the shedding of his blood. As certainly therefore, as the believing communicant eats the bread and drinks the cup, he receives a pledge or seal of his acceptance with God and his title through Christ to eternal life. A richer blessing cannot be bestowed upon a human being on this side of heaven.

3dly. A further object of this ordinance is, to promote unity and brotherly love among Christians. At the table of the Lord rich and poor, learned and unlearned, great and small, the strong and the weak, all meet on common ground, and forgetting their difference of external circumstances, proclaim to each other and the world that they regard and love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, that they are disposed to comfort and assist each other in their pilgrimage to the heavenly Canaan. The language of their hearts is or ought to be: "For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." "And hereby shall all men know that we are his disciples, if we have love one to another." The violation of this design of the Supper by the Corinthians, was severely censured by the apostles; 1 Cor. xi. 20—22.

4thly. The participation of this ordinance is also *a public profession of faith in our Lord.* Christians thereby declare that they are not ashamed of Jesus; that they acknowledge him as their Lord and Savior, and are resolved to adhere to his doctrines and trust for salvation in his atonement till death. They in effect declare: "Christ is our only hope; him we publicly confess as the author and donor of life eternal, and as our Lord and King; to him alone we look for pardon and redemption; we pledge ourselves to imitate his example and live in conformity to his precepts. We renew our vows of obedience to him and engage to grow in knowledge and grace and in every Christian virtue, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord, until he shall call us home."

In relation to *the subjects of this ordinance,* Lutherans teach, that it ought not to be dispensed

1st. To the *immoral* and *indifferent.* If the representation just given of its several objects be correct, it is manifest that not one of those objects can be accomplished in reference to this description of persons. Of what avail then is it for such individuals to commune?

2nd. To the *insane* and *idiots.* Such are not moral and responsible agents, and not capable of a rational celebration of the Supper.

3rd. To *children.* The remark just made, applies also to children. Besides, the apostle expressly requires *self-examination* as a necessary preparation, and pronounces a judgment on those who "do not discern the Lord's body." Are children capable of self-examination? and does not innocent and unavoidable incapacity to perform a duty, absolve us from its discharge?

All communicants in the Lutheran church, are required to be baptized and in good standing; to entertain a sincere belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be engaged in a sincere effort to lead a life in accordance with their Christian profession. What progress they must have made in religion before they approach the table of the Lord, Lutherans do not pretend to specify; and as they generally agree that the same qualifications that are required from a candidate for confirmation, entitle him also to a place at the communion table; I refer the reader for more specific instruction on this subject, to pages 192—200, chap. xii.

"The *practical influence*," says Dr. S. S. Schmucker, "of this ordinance on the Christian, is indeed incalculable. By it his *views* of the great plan of salvation through the merits of a crucified Savior are kept fundamentally correct. So long as he retains this belief, he cannot sanction the opinions of those, who regard the Savior's death as a mere attestation of his sincerity, or of the truth of the doctrines taught by him: nor can his soul find pleasure in those, who fritter away the gospel scheme into a mere code of morality, and send man upon the ground of his own "filthy" righteousness, to claim justification at the bar of God. Hence it cherishes in us a healthful sense of our own sinfulness, inability to fulfill the law, and of the height and depth and length and breadth of that surpassing love of God, which induced him to exchange the hallelujahs of angels for the curses of men, the throne of heaven for the malefactor's cross, and the diadem of glory for a crown of thorns.

"The *feelings* accompanying these views he finds to be of the most salutary kind. Humble penitence for the sins which crucified the Lord of glory, ardent gratitude for this amazing display of his benevolence, and sincere love to

him as "the chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely," as that divine being in whom all excellencies concentre, who is the proper and only object of adoration in the universe, and whom it is his everlasting interest no less than duty to love with an unceasing love, in life, in death, and through the endless ages of eternity.

"Exciting these views and feelings, how can this ordinance fail to prompt the Christian's soul to proper *action*, to a more entire surrender of his heart to God, to greater confidence in the plan of salvation through the blood of atonement; that is, to a greater measure of living faith, to renewed purposes of holy obedience, and thus to the attainment of the end for which the Savior bled,—'remission of sins?'"

The last point to be exhibited on this subject, relates to the much disputed question about the *mode* of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. I must here premise that Lutherans do not believe in *consubstantiation*, *subpanation*, nor *impanation*. These errors have indeed been again and again imputed to them; but they repudiate them all. I know not and never did know a single minister or intelligent

layman in the whole Lutheran church who believed in any one of them. As for that abomination of Romanism, called *transubstantiation*, no branch of the church of Christ is more decidedly opposed to it than the Lutheran. It is contrary to the clearest testimony of every one of our senses, and not only the senses of one individual, but of all men of every age, condition, generation and country. It is an outrageous monstrosity, hatched more than a thousand years after this sacrament was instituted; and consubstantiation is cousin-*german* to it.

With regard to the *particular mode* of Christ's presence, it must be admitted that some Lutherans in their endeavors to explain it, have adopted phraseology which was calculated to give rise to the opinion that they believed in consubstantiation, and there are still a few,—precious few, and they mostly from Europe, who profess to believe in a *peculiar* mode of the divine presence in the Eucharist, which is said to be equivalent to consubstantiation;—a presence and influence of the glorified body of Christ, which is not only deeply mysterious, but also extraordinary, unique and supernatural, and of which they themselves can form no distinct or definite idea. But as these

form exceptions to the great body of the Lutheran church, and it is certain, from the manifest absurdity of the doctrine, that their number never can become large in the Lutheran church, it would be unfair to represent their view as that of the Lutherans in this country. The generally received opinion is, that the bread and wine remain unchanged in the Lord's Supper; that they are merely symbolic representations of the Savior's body, but that there is nevertheless a special spiritual blessing bestowed on all worthy communicants by which their faith and Christian graces are strengthened. This is the view which Melancthon and those Lutheran divines seem to have maintained who were termed Sacramentarians. With the few isolated exceptions mentioned above, this is the common view of the great mass of Lutherans in the United States, and of a very large number of learned Lutheran divines in Europe.

It may however, be objected that the language used in Article XI. of the Augsburg Confession is too strong to admit of this interpretation; for it is there affirmed "that the body and blood of Christ are (vere adsint) *actually present.*" But it must be remembered

that the German copy of the Confession teaches how this language is to be understood; and that version expressly declares, that the body and blood are present "under the *form* and *emblems* of bread and wine." Consequently it is a *spiritual* presence to which the Confession alludes. The truth of this remark appears still more clearly from the explanation of the Lutheran reformers, contained in the *Formula Concordiæ*.* They there distinctly inform us, that it is a *spiritual presence* which they maintained: "By that word" (spiritually,) they say, "we exclude those Capernaitish notions concerning a *gross* and *carnal* presence, which have been attributed to our churches by the Sacramentarians, in defiance of all our public protestations against them. And when we use this term (spiritually) we wish to be understood as signifying that the body and blood are received, and eaten, and drank spiritually in the Lord's Supper. For although the participation is effected by the mouth, the manner in which it is done is spiritual."

If it be further objected that Lutherans had no right thus to soften and explain away the strong phraseology of the Confession; I reply

* Art. VII.—No. XXI. p. 604.

that they certainly had a right to define the import of their own language and to tell what they meant by it. If not, then whence did Presbyterians and Episcopalians derive authority thus to interpret the equally strong language of *their great teachers?* Calvin says: "In the *mystery* of the Supper, by the emblems of bread and wine, Christ is really exhibited to us, that is, *his body, in which he yielded full obedience,* in order to work out a righteousness for us; by which in the first place, we may, as it were coalesce into one body with him, and secondly being made partakers of the *substance* of himself, also be strengthened by the reception of every blessing."* As regards the Episcopal church, we find Cranmer, one of her earliest and ablest reformers, using the following language: "Christ saith of the bread, 'this is my body,' and of the cup he saith, 'this is my blood.' Wherefore we ought to believe that in the sacrament *we receive truly the body and blood of Christ.* For God is Almighty, he is able therefore, to do all things that he will."† Ridley says: "I agree that the sacrament is the *very true and natural body of Christ,* even that which was born of the Vir-

*Vide Institut. Lib. iv. c. xvii. 11. †Hook, p. 96.

gin Mary, which ascended into heaven, which sitteth on the right hand of God, the Father, which shall come from thence to judge the quick and the dead, only I differ in the way and manner of being," &c.* Now, it is maintained in the Presbyterian and Episcopal churches, that the writers meant a *spiritual presence;* granted; and so also whatever may have been the views of the early reformers on this subject, it is certain that in the present day Lutheran churches hold to none other but a spiritual presence of Christ in the holy supper.

Accordingly, they reject the unphilosophical and unscriptural idea of the presence of the glorified body of Christ, both substantially and influentially, and teach that the influence of the ordinance is not by the spiritual presence of a *material* body, or the spiritual eating and drinking of a *material* body and blood; (which language, if it have any meaning at all, involves a gross metaphysical absurdity,) but by the Holy Spirit through the symbolic representation of divine truth. Yet nevertheless, that the worthy reception of this ordinance is at-

* Hook's Discourse, p. 99.

tended by a special spiritual blessing from the Savior, may be inferred from the following considerations:

1. Because of the peculiarly impressive manner in which the solemn truths conveyed by it, are presented to the mind.

2. Because the promise of such a blessing seems to be contained in the strongly figurative language of our Lord, by which he represents himself as the spiritual food of the soul, and also in the declaration of Paul, that the cup and bread are the communion, or communication or bestowment of the body and blood of Christ, that is, of the blessings purchased by his atoning death.

3. Because in most churches and especially in the Lutheran, religious exercises of various kinds are usually combined on sacramental occasions, and continued longer than at other times.

THE END.

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